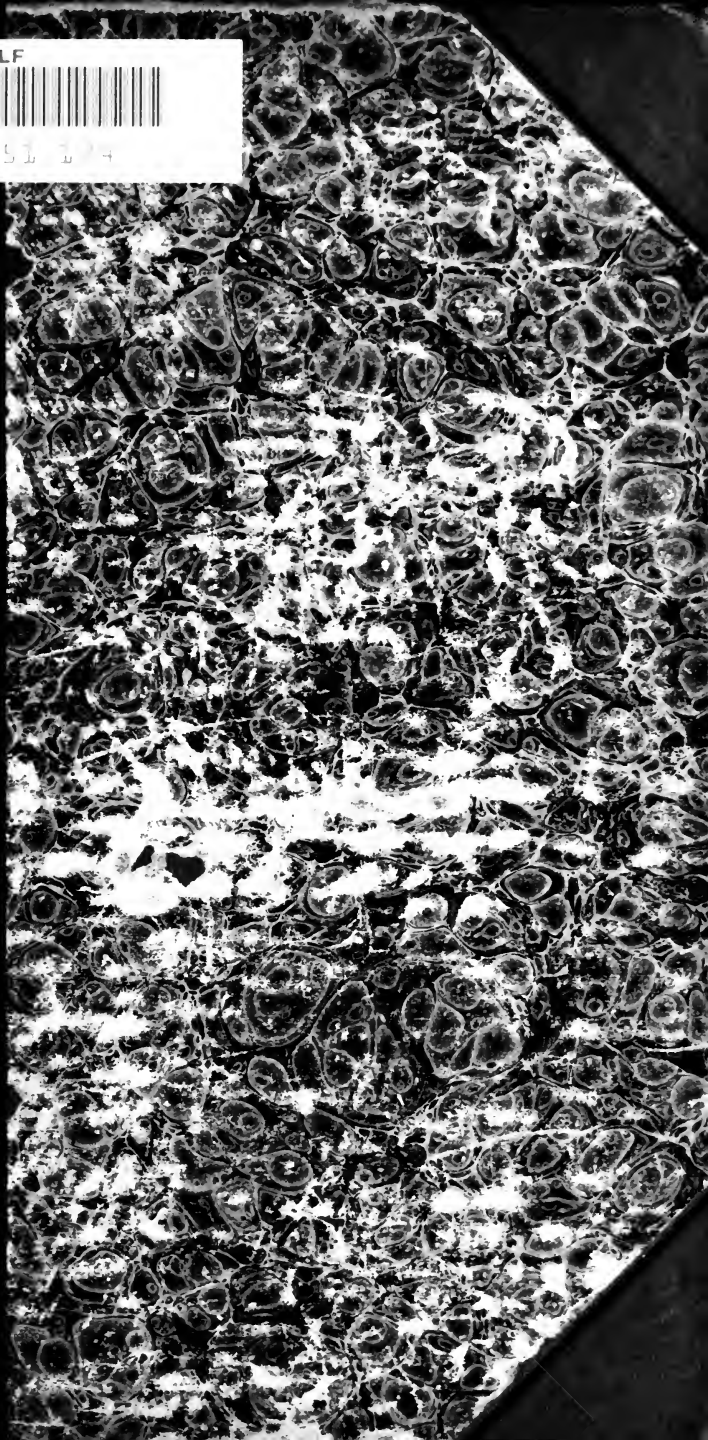
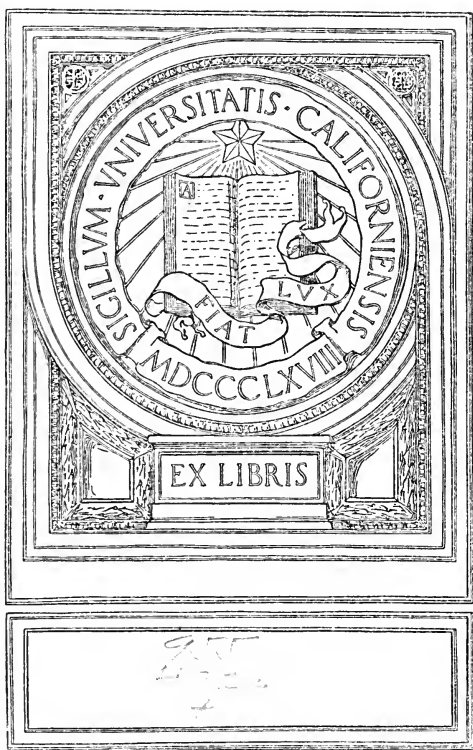


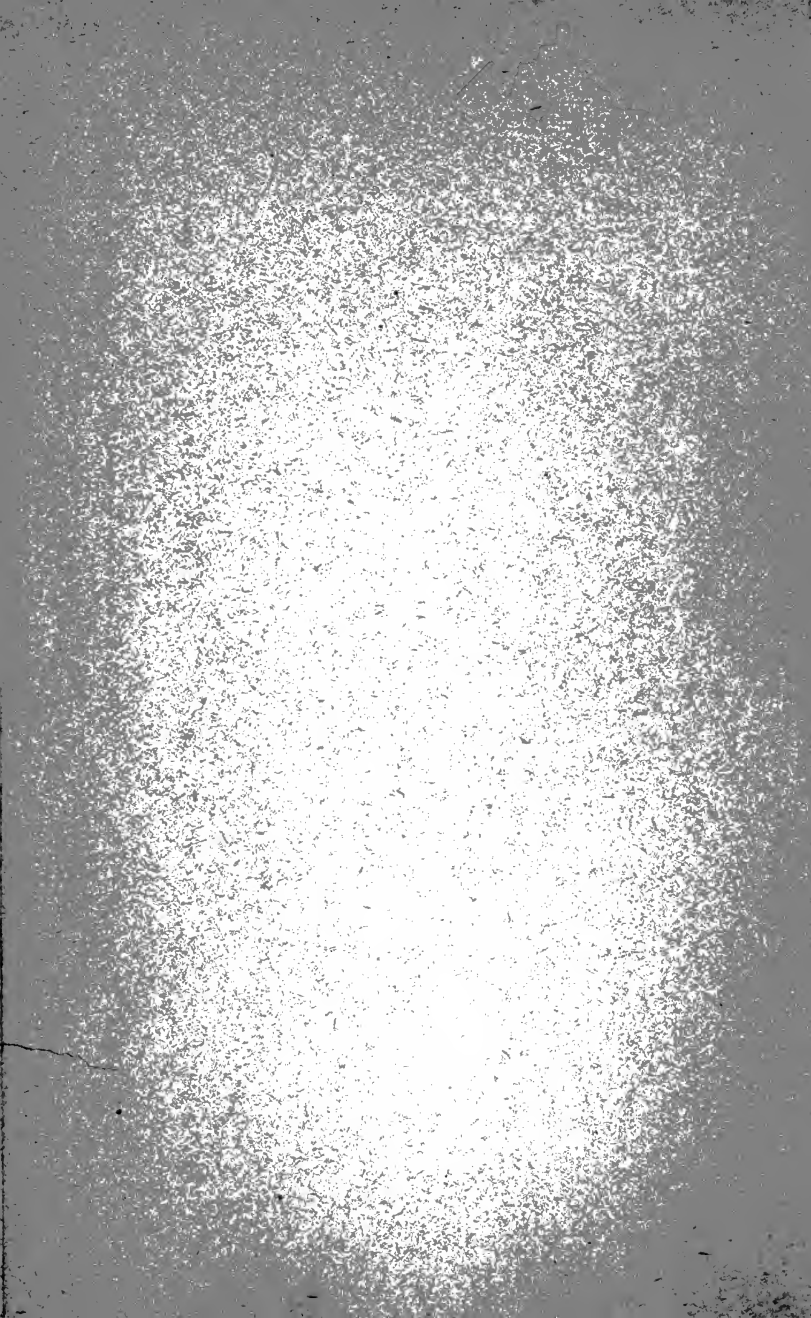
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A TIMID BRAVE.

The Story of an Indian Uprising.

BY

WILLIAM JUSTIN HARSHA,

AUTHOR OF "PLOUGHED UNDER," "THE LIKENESS OF A PALACE," ETC.

"Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
Who have faith in God and nature,
Who believe that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms there are longings,
Yearnings, strivings for the good they comprehend not:
* * * * *
Listen to this simple story."

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A TIMID BRAVE.

CHAPTER I.

A CURIOUS THEFT.

“Do not grieve so, my husband. What are a few cattle to such a brave Maha as you?”

She hung over his bowed head with more tenderness than an Indian's wife is usually allowed to show. She even ventured to smooth his brow and cheeks, on which a half-formed rage was struggling with perplexity. He did not resent her tenderness, nor did he reply at once. His head bent farther down between his clenched fists, and his deep sighs almost became sobs.

“Look at little Wattena playing at your knee,” the woman went on. “Wakanda has given her to us. He has given us many more blessings. Let us pray to Him, and ask Him to give us back our cattle.”

“There is no God!” the Indian muttered, fiercely. “He would not let me and my race be wronged so. He may exist for white Christians; He does not for us.”

His wife had spoken in the soft Indian dialect. He had answered her in gruff English. She did not understand a word of this language, not having enjoyed with him the advantages of a training in a mission-school. He had acted for several years as a guide and interpreter to General Crook and other officers, and when he cursed

either God or the whites he used the language in which he had learned to swear. But his wife could catch the meaning of his manner, if not of his words, and knew that she must be silent.

Little Wattena, who had been looking wonderingly out of her dark eyes at her father, now began to wail.

"Yes," cried the Maha, speaking in the Indian language, that his wife might understand, "the white children can have gifts and good things, but the poor papooses must wail and weep. Here is where the blow falls heaviest. I have heard just such cries as these of little Wattena in every Indian camp. We older ones can stand poverty and crusts, but it is hard—O God ! it is hard—for the children !"

He sprang up, kicking over the box on which he sat, and went gloomily to the window. But he could not endure the sight of the empty cow-sheds behind the house, and turned back again.

"Wattena will cry for her cup of milk to-night," he said, moodily ; "and we will have only water to give her. I had thought to sell two of the steers soon, and put away the money to send her to school by and by. I want to educate my daughter as much as any white man does. But how can I ?"

He was strangely calm. You would expect him to be in a passion—to storm and rave. If a white merchant loses a yard of calico he is after the police immediately to ferret out the thief. If a hundred dollars be taken from the money-drawer, or if his family horse be stolen from his barn, the whole city is aroused, and woe betide the unfortunate criminal. But here was a man, with a husband's pride and a father's love, robbed of nearly all he had. The very food was taken out of his child's mouth, and yet he was self-restrained. He mourned

rather than raged. In spite of the pride of a man and the fire of a half-civilized blood, he sighed rather than swore. Here is a phenomenon that we need to look into.

It is true that when his wife first told him of the loss, when he came home from the Agency, where he had gone to buy bacon and sugar, he had been violent enough for a few minutes.

“Who stole them?” he cried, madly.

“The white men.”

“When did they come?”

“About an hour after you left. They said they had seen you up the road.”

“Curses on them, so they did. They knew I was away, and they dared to rob an unprotected farm-yard. How many were there?”

“Three. They rode up to the door, and asked for a drink of water. I was terribly afraid of them, for I remembered my poor sister, Kathewana. I gave them a drink. One of them tried to take hold of me, but I caught up Wattena and ran into the house. They all laughed at this, but I was glad to escape. I locked the door, and stood out of sight, trembling. I saw them go to the cattle-yard, and throw down the bars. The cows and steers did not want to go away. The white men cracked their whips, and struck them many cruel blows, and the poor beasts bellowed piteously to be left at home. Even little Wattena cried when she heard the noise.”

Then he had stormed about, and called on Wakanda for vengeance. He threatened to go to the agent, and to the commander of the military post about twenty miles away. He would show the whites that they were not utter slaves, after all.

“Why not go?” his wife had asked, innocently.

Then he had dropped upon the box, and covered his

face with his hands. Why not, indeed? There were many reasons why such an expedition would be entirely fruitless. Even supposing the agent willing to help him, which was very doubtful, the thieves had, by that time, escaped beyond the borders of the reservation, and the agent's control over them was at an end. As to the soldiers, they were rendered powerless by the *posse comitatus* act, and could not recover the property of Indians, even when found in the hands of well-known thieves. There was nothing for it but to submit patiently to this new wrong added to the long list of infamies practised against the unhappy Red Men.

Why not take down his rifle from the wall, yonder, and pursue the thieves, and shoot them in their tracks? The Maha had a fine Remington and plenty of cartridges supplied by the Government—why should he not use them to defend his property? This would have been your course and mine, but it was not thought of by Noah, the brave. His wife did not suggest it to him. They both knew better. A resort to arms would have brought the soldiers down upon the whole tribe, and the blood of Wattena, his wife, and of little Wattena, as well as of countless disinterested and perfectly innocent persons, would have flowed out upon the bright Nebraska grass.

Why not appeal to the law? In these United States we glory in our freedom and justice. Ah, this was the hardest part of it. Every oppressed creature of the whole world can claim protection from our laws except the native American. How this came about I will tell you further on. But Noah knew it well. In some cases he could be punished by law, but there was no case in which he could appeal to it for safety and redress. He was not a *person*—no Indian is—before the law.

He had sat all the afternoon thinking of these various possibilities. At last his wife suggested an expedient.

"Why not go to Faber's ranch, where our cattle have been taken, and steal them back?"

Ha, here was something practical!

"A good plan, Wattena," he said, more cheerfully. "It will do, at all events, to try. It is certain that they have been taken to Faber's. He was the leader of the gang. They will never imagine that I would dare pursue them, and in the quietness of the night I can drive them off. It surely is not wrong to steal back my own property. The good missionary will never scold me for it. And if I cannot get them all, I can, at least, secure the old cow, that little Wattena may have milk."

As if to confirm him in his resolution, the child was at this moment sobbing from her corner:

"Milk! milk!"

This young Maha was by no means a weak-minded fellow. As he stood up now in all the resolute energy of a new purpose, he seemed every inch a man. He was dressed in citizens' clothes, except that he wore moccasins instead of shoes. A belt that his Wattena had worked for him in bright beads encircled his waist. A flaming red scarf was round his throat, and his straight, coarse hair was knotted in one place round a small feather, to show that he had a chief's blood in his veins. There was something noble and dignified in his face in spite of its dark hue, and its rough, irregular features.

Wattena, his wife, was one of those Indian women whose faces are strangely fascinating. You would have taken her for a Spanish lady, forced by poverty to exposure to out-door weather, which deepened the orange tint into a sombre but striking bronze. Her features were regular and clearly cut, and would have been called

perfect save that her cheek-bones were high and her lips a trifle thick. Her eyes exerted the main fascination of her face ; they were large, dark, wondering, and in their liquid depths rested an innocent trust. The attractions of face and form of Indian women soon fade, but while they last they place their possessors, in many cases, on a level with the fashionable beauties of the gayest and wealthiest society. Wattena was clad in the cheapest calico, and her long black hair was coiled loosely upon her neck, but had she been dressed in silk, and gotten up with the skill and taste of a trained maid, she would have outshone many a distinguished belle about whom the papers rave.

Her very presence brightened up the poor little home that they had built for themselves. They had selected a slightly spot on the reservation, and had toiled together in building a small house. There were only three rooms in it, and they had been put together without much thought of arrangement, but they seemed a perfect paradise to the young couple. Indeed, their house was much better than the tepees and dug-outs and rude shanties in which the remainder of the tribe lived. Consequently, they prided themselves not a little on their residence, which would have seemed poor and scanty enough to us. As for furniture, there was almost none. They had to pay enormous prices to the Government trader for everything they needed, and their slender stock of funds had been exhausted upon a stove, a table and a bed. They used boxes for chairs, and had no need of dishes—their bare cooking utensils being all that they could afford.

Noah was soon ready for his expedition. He did not condescend to any expression of endearment toward his wife or child other than a glance, in which pride and

affection were mingled. He loved them as much as any young man can love his wife and babe. He proved that love—as I shall show as I go on with my story—by a sacrifice which few white men have occasion to make. But he was forbidden, by the customs of his race, to show especial tenderness at partings, or joy at greetings.

As he went out he heard little Wattena still wailing, and that nerved him for his work. The team of ponies that he had driven that morning over to the Agency were the only live-stock left upon the place; and he selected one of them, a sprightly, tough little roan mare, to carry him to Faber's ranch. The sympathy between an Indian and his live-stock of all kinds is very close, but it is especially so with his pony and his dog. It reminds one of that ardent affection which the Arabs entertain for their splendid horses, and the quick responsiveness of the latter to the wishes of the former. It is the same with all nomadic and simple-hearted races. As you look at an Indian pony it may seem lazy, stupid, and good-for-nothing, but its master can inspire it with fire, speed and endurance. This he does without whip or spur. In ordinary cases, it carries only the rope lasso round its neck, its rider guiding and inspiring it by pressures of his knees and a few guttural monosyllables.

Noah's little roan was soon convinced that no ordinary work was on hand. The nervous tension of her rider's muscles and the impatient nudges of his knees showed her this. She broke into a quick, swift gallop and settled down to what she knew would be a long run. A similar transformation was wrought in Noah's thin, mangy dog, which was allowed to follow. At home he was sleepy and inactive, except when a chance traveller passed that way, then he would snarl, with his tail between his lazy legs. But, as he now followed the roan

over the crisp buffalo-grass, he seemed as noble a specimen of his race as his master and the mare were of theirs. The three were so nearly alike that it required the free air of the prairies and the glorious sense of unnoticed liberty to bring out the nobility and spirit within them. The traveller can see no sadder picture on the American Continent than the group so common at the railway-stations on the plains : a crushed, melancholy Indian, his lazy, indifferent pony, and his starved, snarling dog. Possibly a squaw with her papoose crouches in the background. It is a thrilling tableau of the effect of a long policy of exaction and treachery upon a once proud and independent race.

Noah straightened up his shoulders as he rode along. He felt himself a man, as he traversed the valleys and divides that his fathers had for centuries called their own. There was only one road through the reservation, and that led up to the Agency. There were many winding trails, but he was able to strike across the country as the crow flies. It was a brilliant summer night. The stars seemed so near that he could almost reach up and pluck a handful of them. The glorious stretches of rolling prairie swept away in every direction, while afar he could see the glimmer of the radiant sky upon the surface of the Missouri. The sod fairly sang under the sharp blows of the roan's unshod feet, and Noah took a long breath, and felt that he was doing right.

When he had gone a few miles he saw a figure approaching. He let the roan ease up her gallop, for his sharp eyes had recognized the stranger. It was an Indian woman, with a scarlet blanket over her head, and a pair of quick, black eyes surmounting sad but comely cheeks.

"Kathewana," Noah said, as he stopped beside her,

“are you going up to the house? It is well. Wattena will welcome you. Any news?”

“A company of soldiers are coming to-morrow to hunt on the reserve.”

She passed on with a squaw's peculiar, pigeon-toed step. Poor little Kathewana! Ruined by the white man's perfidy and lust, she was now the disgraced victim of the lowest soldiery.

Noah sighed as the roan sprang into her gallop again. The dangers attending the coming of a band of soldiers he very well knew. We, in our comfortable homes, fear nothing for the safety of our property and the honor of our wives when soldiers or any company of strangers camp near us. Why? Think over that question a moment.

It was a ride of about eight miles to Faber's ranch, just outside the southern line of the reservation. Swiftly the little mare bore her master over that distance; and he, in his silent ride, made a brilliant picture—so erect, so easy, so well formed—his head bare, and with his touch of crimson, which the night could not hide, at his neck. His heart was filled with misgiving and pain, but he felt that he was doing nothing to break his Christian vows in stealing back his own. Poor fellow; it was his only chance to recover his property. How could he tell that it would bring terrible consequences upon him and his tribe?

He left his pony at a little distance from Faber's inclosures, and crept noiselessly forward. The ranchmen and cowboys were fast asleep, and an Indian knows how to quiet dogs. There were herds of cattle grazing or resting on the grass at a little distance, but he knew that his stock would be in the inclosure. If left free, they would have taken the nearest trail home. He soon found

them, and his first care was to rub his hand over their flanks. Alas ! they had already been branded ! All except the old cow. Thank Wakanda for that ! He could take her, though he knew he would be strung up like a dog if he touched a hair of the others.

“ Little Wattena shall have milk,” he muttered.

And then, quietly, through the brilliant, dewy night, he drove the old cow homeward.

CHAPTER II.

A PRIVATE COUNCIL.

His return was, necessarily, slower. He had abundant time for reflection, and his thoughts were by no means pleasant or hopeful. When was all this robbery to end? He had gone to work—he and Wattena, after being married—with a sincere desire to build up a home, and to live usefully and respectably, as white people do. They had selected a fruitful quarter section on the reservation, and, after their house was built, they went to work cultivating the fields with a will. Many laughed at them, and said it was no use, that the white settlers around would steal their crops, and drive off their stock, and tear down their fences. Others said it was better just to live in their tepees and dug-outs, for they would be removed to the Indian Territory eventually, and to build houses would only arouse the rapacity of the settlers, and hasten the catastrophe. But Noah and Wattena thought that it would do no harm to make a trial of living respectably, and had set themselves resolutely about it. And when little Wattena was born to them they had been filled with new zeal. She should go to the mission-school first; after that she should have the advantages of one of those Eastern schools that Noah had seen on his journeys. He was strong and full of bravery; Wattena was glad to toil and save; why should they not prove an exception to the great mass of Indian life, and

give their dear little daughter an education ? Noah knew best what cheer and happiness that education would bring ; but Wattena, in her wondering admiration of her husband's mastery of the mysterious English, really yearned for the advantages more.

But they had met with endless losses and disappointments. Not only were all the gloomy forebodings of their friends, so far as the settlers were concerned, realized, but hindrances that Noah had never imagined grew out of the relation that the Indian sustains to the Government. Not being legally a *person* he could not make a contract. If he wanted to bargain for the simplest farming utensil he was compelled to find some white man to represent him, and make the purchase in his name. In these transactions he was sure to lose more or less before all was settled. When he sold a pig or a pony he was always cheated out of part of the price, and as he could not appeal to any law, there was nothing for it but to submit. He was required by Government regulation to buy all his supplies of the trader at the Agency, who put what prices he pleased upon his wares. So that Noah rapidly found himself growing poorer and poorer, in spite of his most frantic efforts. If he had received one tenth part of the annuities that ought to come to him, that were voted him every year by the Government, he might have lived in luxury. But these had dwindled into nothingness before his needy hand was reached. And now the stealing of the few cattle he had, and their being branded by Faber's men, had cut off all the earnings of the past year, and left him in worse plight than ever.

He was thinking this over for the hundredth time, when he discovered a light in a little valley to the right of his course. A cluster of tepees stood on the farther

hill, and Noah knew well enough what that light signified. It was a council-fire of the young men's party of the tribe, and this was their headquarters, or rallying-point. He was just in the mood to enjoy the oratory of that band ; and, leaving the cow to make the best of her way home alone, he turned his pony's head in the direction of the lighted circle. When he had approached within a few rods he slipped off the roan's back, and letting her take to the grass, he advanced among his fellow Mahas. No surprise was occasioned by his coming, and he was given a place in the crouching circle round a slowly-dying fire.

There were, altogether, about twenty engaged in the deliberations. They were mostly in their flannel shirt-sleeves, with bare heads, and did not seem, at first sight, a remarkably animated or interesting group. As you studied them, however, you were compelled to admire their earnestness and devotion to their purpose. One of their number was gaudily dressed in a suit of highly colored deer-skin, with all manner of tassels and ornaments of teeth and bone, and at his side hung a small, cheap mirror, framed in pine. His name was Strong Foot, and his dress indicated that he was prepared to visit some young Indian girl with the hope of making her his wife. He had probably just come from such a delightful occupation. He was haranguing the circle of squatting figures as Noah came up.

"Yes, I love my Little Star. I admit it, but that makes me as firm as the rocks above the Missouri in my purpose. She is to me a star indeed ; I am following the trail of light that she casts from her eyes. Do you think she would want me to submit like a cowardly cur, to be lashed by a master that I could easily destroy ? I tell you, war is our only remedy, our only satisfaction.

Far better fall upon the Wagha,* wreak vengeance on them, and then take refuge in the hills. We can but die there ; we are sure to die here. This is my opinion, and I have not so great reason for hating the Wagha as some of you have. I desire only to be true to my Indian blood and to my Little Star."

He sat down amid a murmur of applause. After a few moments, a square-shouldered fellow in ragged clothes stood up, and said :

"I am of the opinion of Strong Foot. You know my history well. Once I was dressed like him. Once I felt his joy in life, and his pride to be looked up to by a tender-hearted Maha girl. You all know that her name was Kathewana. You all know how my little flower was crushed under the cruel foot of the Wagha. She thought she could deny the Wagha nothing. We have all, too long, been impressed by the same belief. What have I for all my love and hopes now? Ashes and bitterness! I would forgive all and marry my Kathewana, but you all know that her ruin has stolen away her senses, and she is a mere plaything in the soldiers' hands. That my Maha blood could not stand. It is hard enough to have a sweetheart ruined, but one cannot think of such a thing with his wife. Long ago I broke my mirror, and tore off the ornaments of my lover's dress, and now I work in the fields and mourn in my desolate tepee. I am for war!"

A more impetuous man now arose, and, with many violent gestures, said :

"I am for the Wagha's blood. What has our great Red Cloud and our wise Spotted Tail said but that war is our only help? They have urged all the tribes to meet

* White men.

in some well-chosen Western spot, and give battle to the death to the insolent and infamous power that has slowly been encroaching upon us.* Do not I know what that power is? Beside the sufferings you have endured in common with me I have had to bear special trials. My own mother died of a loathsome disease, caught from the white man. Its poison still burns in my own veins. Our whole tribe is filled with it. Of what use is my miserable carcase on the earth? Let me have the blood of a few of the Wagha to cheer me as I pass into the hunting-grounds of the future of which our fathers used to talk, and I care not whether they be happy or not. I am for the Wagha's blood."

There was a long pause after this speech. Many eyes were turned toward Noah, but he did not move. At length another of the group arose, and said :

"Our reservation is rich in soil and in minerals. Our fathers have lived here, but what of that? The settlers want to drive us off in order to secure our farming land. The ranchmen want to drive us off, to have our grazing land, and the miners want to drive us off, that they may sink their shafts into our gold and silver ore. The lies they tell we cannot contradict. We are utterly at the Wagha's mercy. Their great papers tell of our ignorance, laziness and poverty; and by and by an army comes to take us to the Indian Territory. For one, I say, let us show our manhood—let us go to war. But I see Noah here. He is a young man, but is not of the young man's party. I would like to hear his opinion."

Thus appealed to, Noah could not remain silent. He slowly arose, and said :

* There is no fiction about this proposition of the great chiefs named. They made it seriously and repeatedly.

“ I know that I am set down as a coward by you all, because I am not of the war party. My natural inclinations would prompt me to join you. Have I not the Maha blood? Have I not the young man’s fire? Is there one of you that has seen me turn pale in danger, or stop in what I have undertaken? Has the storm ever kept me from going on my journey, or have I ever hesitated to cross the Missouri on the floating ice-cakes, because the current was swift and boisterous? I think you will not say I am a coward in these things.

“ Why have I hesitated, and why do I hesitate now? I have had troubles to bear, as well as the rest of you. The taint of poor Kathewana’s ruin has fallen also upon me. The poison of the white man’s evil runs in my own veins. I was on my way home from stealthily stealing back one of my own cows when I saw the brightness of your council-fire in the sky. I left the remainder of my little herd in Faber’s ranch. They are branded, and so are lost to me forever. And with them have gone the profits of a year’s hard toil. My Wattena mourns in our poor home because little Wattena wails. I have milk for the little babe, but I am no nearer being able to send her to school than I was before all the saving and all the toil.

“ Do you think, then, that I would not go to war with you if I thought that would bring relief from our troubles? It is not my life that I count dear. I hold it only as one of the prairie blossoms that may be crushed under any foot and welcome. But I am not right to bring ruin and death upon the other members of our tribe. Wattena must share my fate, and would gladly die at my side; even little Wattena might be crushed upon my breast, where she uttered her first wail, and first began to breathe. But I can never give a voice to

bring the sharp piercing of rifle-balls to hearts that are innocent of any desire for war. You know that the Great Father holds our whole tribe guilty for the faults of any individual or any party of the tribe. Beside this, you must know that war simply means death to us. We are the weaker party, and must go down before the well-trained regiments of white soldiers as the wild grass goes down before the storm. Or, suppose that we killed ten men for every warrior that we could muster? The Great Father would send ten more to avenge their death.

“I have been among the Wagha more than any of you. I know their strength, and I know their inclinations. They are very like the Red Men—some are good, and some are bad. The good Wagha desire to help and protect us, but they know not how. They do not realize that we cannot make a contract. They do not know that we have no existence as persons before the law. My plan is to live quietly and peaceably, tilling our farms, and submitting to any wrong or indignity until the sentiment in the United States has so grown in our favor that we may have the protection of law. It will come. It is only a matter of time. Robbery and beggary are hard to bear, but are they worse than death? Going to war will surely bring this latter upon us, but abiding peacefully at our homes may insure safety. I say, not the Wagha’s blood, but his friendship; not the horrors of war, but the protection of law.”

As he sat down one who had not spoken cried :

“The Wagha’s friendship! We have already too much of it. Alas, it attaches itself rather to our stock and property than to ourselves. He loves these, though he does not love us.”

This sally evoked the laughter of the group. It must

not be imagined that Indians are the stoical and solemn personages that Cooper and his followers have represented them to be. Their trials and wrongs have driven them to a reserved and moody air before the white men. But among themselves, they enjoy a laugh as much as any one, though their mirth is neither maudlin nor boisterous. These hard-worked and grievously-robbed fellows around the dying camp-fire responded gayly to the touch of irony in the speaker's words, and even Noah was compelled to smile, in spite of himself.

"The fire has burned low," Noah resumed, after a moment, "and your council is about out. Let us postpone the decision of the matter until to-morrow. Then the great council occurs with the agent, as you all know, and we may hear some good news as to the intentions of the merciful party of the Wagha. They may yet grant us law. They may yet allow that we are men with the same passions with themselves. What do we see sometimes on our prairies? The clouds that we so much desire pass our parched fields by, again and again. We long, we pray, for the dewy wealth locked up in their dark hearts. And at length it comes—slowly, pattering at first; but by and by with driven sheets of rain, it moistens our soil and saves our crops. So will the white man's mercy come. Let us wait. We will have much to bear, but we will save our lives, and the lives of countless innocent ones. Ha! yonder comes the morning. I must go on to my home and Wattena."

They all took his departure for a signal to disperse. As he rode on through the trembling, uncertain glimmers of the morning light, he was wondering if his predictions would have any weight with the young men's party. He knew their spirit and their determination. Would they hurry on a collision with the ranchmen and settlers

around the reservation, and bring the military down upon the unwarlike portion of the tribe? Noah had never been at war with the whites, but he knew that it was usually precipitated by a few hot-headed young men, such as had been in council round that lonely, flickering fire. He determined to put forth an honest effort on the morrow—on the day, rather, that was just dawning—to reconcile the white men with the red.

As he rode up before his little inclosure he found the cow anxious to be admitted. He must watch this one remaining treasure now, for little Wattena's sake. It would do to milk her, and so he went to the house for the pail.

There was a candle burning in the little kitchen. He had not noticed it until now. Something must be wrong—yes, there was his wife holding little Wattena in her arms.

"I am so glad you are here," Wattena said. "Our little waghta* is very sick. See how she burns with fever. She has been calling you."

Noah took his hot and almost unconscious babe into his arms, and, sitting down upon the floor, swayed back and forth in the desolation of a new grief. Fathers, do you not know how he suffered? Have you ever felt the parching breath of a fever-stricken child against your cheek? That little form was as comely to him as your babes are to you. But what was he to do for a physician? And how should he pay one, if found? He no longer believed in the medicine-men of his tribe; he occupied the anomalous position that many awakening savages must, of desiring far more than his knowledge and means would warrant.

* Blossom.

CHAPTER III.

THE PUBLIC COUNCIL.

To be sure, there was one recourse. The Government provided a physician for the tribe. He had his headquarters up at the Agency, and was usually very willing to prescribe for patients brought to his office. He had, however, shown himself very reluctant to visit the sick in distant parts of the reservation. Money could overcome this reluctance, but with this powerful inducement the members of the tribe were poorly provided. Would he ride all the way to Noah's home to see little Wattena? It would do no harm to ask him; and evidently something must be done immediately, or the little babe would die.

"I must milk the cow first," Noah said, laying little Wattena tenderly into his wife's arms. "Hear her bellow! It would not do to let the poor thing suffer. Then, too, Wattena may want milk before I am back. I will send the doctor to you immediately. He shall have the bay pony, if he will not come otherwise. I cannot be back to you until after the council. I pray Wakanda that our little babe may be spared to us."

He stooped and kissed the fevered cheeks, and laid his hand gently on his wife's head, and then went out. He took a melancholy pleasure in placing a pail full of milk in the little kitchen, that it might be handy if the child needed it; and then, mounting his fresh pony, he started up to the Agency.

There was one consideration upon which Noah placed much weight. Both he and the doctor were members of the church. With the Indian this profession was made in real earnestness. He knew very little of the intricacies of theology, and would have been completely puzzled if he had been required to define his faith ; but, in his simplicity of heart, he was trusting to the mercy of the great Wakanda, as shown in the death of His Son. He would often go out on the still prairie to pray. At night he would look up at the brilliant stars, and think that God's face was smiling in their light. On Sabbaths he would hitch up his ponies and take Wattena over to the mission-school, where the good Wagaza, or missionary, preached. He was extremely conscientious in all his religious duties ; as, indeed, all Indians who have sincerely turned to God are. That his mind was uncultured, and his heart barred to many fanciful sympathies, only prevented the entrance into them of the doubts and suspicions as to divine truth that sadden and debase the more favored white race. He took God to be as unquestionable a reality as the singing brook, or the sweeping prairie, or the majestic sky.

Consequently, he accepted the doctor's religious sincerity as a matter of course. He had been puzzled more than once to reconcile this with his unwillingness to take even ordinary pains with the sick of the tribe, unless a handsome present was forthcoming ; but the question had never been concerned closely with his own home, and so he had passed it by. He thought that the doctor would surely ride over to see little Wattena, since both he and Noah professed faith in the same Jesus who went any distance to heal the sick. There was nothing that Noah could think of to prevent him. The day was one of those glorious glimpses of heaven that come in

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autumn to Nebraska and Dakota. Not a cloud was to be seen. Far away in every direction stretched the radiant, illimitable blue over the tumbling prairie. Noah had never seen the ocean in a storm, hence he could not appreciate the common comparison of the prairies to a congealed sea. But there was something in its graceful contours and storm-worn divides that filled him with a perpetual delight. He had longed for them bitterly when he was away in the white man's cities, and he knew that many of his race had died for love of them when taken to the Indian Territory.

Noah was not making as good speed now as last night. The bay pony was not so fast as the roan. Besides, he was not filled with the passionate eagerness that he had felt when going to Faber's ranch for his stolen property. To be sure, he was anxious to get the doctor as soon as possible, but there was not that impatient tension to his muscles that could arouse his pony to great exertion. His heart was with his little Wattena, and this gave an irresolute position to his body to which the bay very soon responded. She bore him along, therefore, at an uneven gait, now springing into a gallop, and then relaxing into a meditative trot. Her rider was sadly revolving in his mind the chances of his sweet little child's recovery. He knew almost nothing of diseases, but the fever had proven most fatal to the Indian children. A few had recovered, but the great majority had died. He did not know whether this were through lack of medical attendance or not ; he rather thought it was, because so many of the tribe still clung to the medicine-men, and refused to employ the white doctor. A sickening feeling stole over his heart as he thought of the mere possibility that Wattena might die. How could he ever lay

her away under the wild grass that she had so often plucked with her baby hands? Ah! he must not think of this. He must hasten to the doctor, and send him, at any cost, to save the life of his little one.

The Agency buildings stood near the centre of the reservation. There was a very comfortable two-story frame-house for the agent. Of course, cut off as he was from so many advantages of civilization, and with a niggardly salary and perquisites of \$10,000 a year, it was only right to furnish him with a comfortable home, even at the expense of the Indian's appropriations. The trader's store was on an opposite corner, beside it was a school-house—used also as a carpenter-shop, for improvements round the agent's place and for repairs of his furniture. On every side were well-kept fields, upon which the Government farmer expended all his care, impressing Indian youths into his service as harvest hands, and pocketing, with the agent, all the proceeds of the crops. A blacksmith-shop was also kept up by the Government for the convenience and gain of the agent. The Indians did not shoe their ponies. They needed repairs for their wagons, truly, but for these they were made to pay handsomely in money or stock.

The doctor lived in a comfortable house that had been built out of some unaudited Government appropriation. Noah rode up to his door, and, having tied his horse to the fence, went into his office. There he found the doctor, tilted back in his arm-chair, examining the contents of a recent mail.

“Will you go down to see little Wattena at once?” Noah asked, hurriedly. “She has the terrible fever. Her cheeks burn like fire, and her blood rushes through her veins. She will die unless you go now.”

“What! Ten miles down to your house? Why, Noah, I would never get back to the council, and my professional duties require my presence there.”

“I had nothing to give her,” went on the agonized father. “What could I get, what can I send to her to ease her fever and pain?”

“Quinine might do,” replied the doctor, as if in a sort of query; “but I ought to see her before saying definitely. I am very sorry that my professional engagements prevent my going so far.”

“But I have a good pony there at the door,” cried the father. “You may take her and ride down, or you may keep her altogether, if you will only go. You must save my little Wattena, if you can.”

“You may leave the pony, and I will see if I cannot go. Much obliged. I have to trust so many of your tribe that I am glad to receive payment, for once, in advance.”

Noah went out and patted his bay pony on the neck. He was sorry to part with her, for his team would now be broken up, and how could he do his ploughing in the spring? More than this, he was attached to his ponies, as only a solitary and deeply sympathetic person can be attached to his fellow-toilers. But little Wattena must be kept alive at all costs, and he knew that that was the only way to induce the doctor to go to her relief. Having taken farewell of the faithful animal, he watched until the doctor rode off, and then made his way to the council.

This was held in a large shed, built of cottonwood, much warped now by storm and weather, but formerly used as a storehouse for farm implements. On both the building and the implements a former agent had made a very handsome speculation. This was the largest room

on the reservation, and was hence chosen for the councils of the tribe with the agent, or with such special messengers as the Government sent out from time to time.

About five hundred of the men of the tribe were gathered round the building as Noah came up. Some of them were decked out with feathers and ribbons, but the majority wore their rough working clothes. They were by no means a disgusting body of men in appearance. On the faces of all there was some intelligence, and a few had as shrewd expressions as you would see upon a body of white workmen of the same number. There were three clearly marked parties represented. First of all, there was the conservative party that clung to old Indian ideas and customs. The members of this were mostly old men, who desired a return to the rule of the chiefs, held that medicine-men were the best physicians, and contended that all contact with the whites was a disgrace and a hindrance. They favored all the various Indian dances and feasts, and bewailed the good old times, when hunting the dta* and machu† were the most serious businesses of life. This party was gathered on the sunny side of the building, and a few of the older members of it crouched, like shrivelled mummies, against the wall. From these the missionary and the educators received the most serious hindrance, and by them the young people, who had caught some of the ways of the whites, were most speedily encouraged to lapse again into heathen darkness.

The second party was composed of the younger men who desired peace. They saw that safety was in submission to the power of the dominant race, and they

* Buffalo.

† Bear.

hoped for the time when all men should stand on an equality before the law. Noah was a fitting representative of this party. Unfortunately, they could muster among their associates only a small number, compared with the strong force composing their rival parties.

The war party was the third. The principles of this appealed most strongly to the imagination. It was composed largely of young men who gave no heed to the consequences of their emotions, and desired only their immediate gratification. The members were distinguished by their gay dress, and by their dislike of the Wagha. Noah had belonged to them once, but was not of their number now. How little did he realize that he would soon be heartily in sympathy with them again, and would engage upon a brilliant but fruitless contest with the white soldiers !

When the hour for the council came a small fire was kindled in the centre of the shed ; the agent, surrounded by the employés of the Agency, took his place on a raised platform at one end of the building, and the Indians crowded into the other portions of it. The agent was a fat, well-fed man, very fond of beef and sleep. He conducted himself with the highest dignity, and when the pipe of peace had been duly circulated, condescended to ask the Indians present what were their complaints.

There was a long and tedious list of them. Some spoke of their loss of stock, others of their lack of farming implements, and others of their poverty and hunger. This and that treaty had been broken by the Government, this and that had been done by the trader, and this and that had been left undone by the farmer. The agent dozed through most of it, his breakfast having been

rather hearty, but he managed to utter a languid inquiry at stated periods :

“Anything else?”

At last Noah arose to speak. His blood had been burning in his veins all the time that these real wrongs had been so simply told into such unheeding ears. Here was a chance to speak an honest word for his race—yes, and for Wattena and the little sick babe and himself, and he would not let it go by. He had promised himself this one attempt to right the wrongs of so many years. What else could he do than make a speech on the matter? He might touch the agent's heart, and great good would come of it.

“You have heard these complaints,” he said, looking the agent in the eye. “They are not mere fancies. I rise to speak as the Wagha's friend. I have lived among the white men, and I know them better than any of these. You know that I have been faithful and true to them. Why should I not speak plainly and boldly then? The eagle that has not stolen carrion need not fear to face the sun.”

He spoke slowly, and in the Maha dialect, that all present might understand. Indians are natural orators, and Noah was a fine specimen of his race. He was tall and strongly made, and he had now thrown back his shoulders and drawn himself up to his full height. His face was suffused with animation, and his slow, graceful gestures gave an unconscious emphasis to his words. He gradually came to use the language of the chiefs, which is different from the ordinary dialect, being more metaphorical and select.

“The Great Father allows us annuities,” he went on. “Every member of our tribe ought to receive twelve

dollars in money every year. Where are the annuities for the past year? Where is the money that should have come to us the year before this? Has some hawk snatched it from the messenger's pockets? We have received not one cent for five years. The Omahas are promised eight dollars apiece each year, but they have handled the money of the Great Father only once in nine years, and then the amount was one dollar and a quarter per member. Why is this?"

"I haven't seen any of your money," the agent replied, sullenly.

"We are told that our money goes to support the reservation. Out of our annuities the agent and the farmer and the doctor and the blacksmith are paid. Why should we need an agent? Did we not live before you came? Were not our fathers content and happy on these prairies and among these hills? We never asked for an agent. The flocks of brant do not trouble man to show them where the feeding-places are. You say you have come to protect us from the settlers and ranchmen. Did you protect Great Horse, who was shot at his tepee-door last winter? Did you protect Kathewana, who was shamefully betrayed, and now is tossed about by the soldiers as the wild thistle-seed is tossed by the winds? Can you even get us back our stock when once the white men have stolen it? Before we had an agent we had food; now, we and our little ones starve. You protect us as I have seen the eagle protect the coyote pups out there on the prairie. Their mother has run away to find them food somewhere in the snow, and the eagle, with her savage brood, have spied them. See! The old bird corners them in a hollow in a hillside. They raise their faces to her, and snap and whine. And while they tremble and crouch, the young birds pounce

upon their backs, stab out their eyes with their sharp bills, and tear out their hearts with their savage claws. So have you protected us !”

A murmur went round the council, and the agent shifted himself in his chair, but made no reply. Noah paused a moment, and then said :

“ The annuities of the Great Father are not charities. We would scorn to receive your gifts. I found that the white people do not know the truth on this point. Our fathers have sold you land, and we ought to receive our pay. The annuities are the interest on the great sum that is really ours to pay for our land. Why have we not a right to our money ? Some of us have ploughed with wooden sticks hardened in the fire, and reaped with butcher-knives, because we had no money.* How can the Great Father expect us to support ourselves and advance to the ways of the white men under these circumstances ? Will the ants toil forever to build their houses of sand if the Missouri continues to overflow its banks to retard their work, or sweep it all away ? We pay our farmer out of our annuities, we must give him our work, and pay him again for the grain we have helped him to raise. It is the same with our blacksmith.”

Poor Noah was about to say that it was the same with the doctor, but at that moment this important individual walked in pompously, and the words died on the orator's lips. What if he were to be angry and refuse to save little Wattena ? Why was he there at all at this moment ? He could hardly have made all the distance to his house and back again in that time. Noah's heart gave an agonized leap, and in an instant he forgot all the arguments he was about to urge upon the agent that the

* All these statements are proven by the official records.

white man's law might be extended over the reservation. For a moment everything was dark before him, and then he heard one of the war party, who had sprung to his feet, taking up his complaint, and threatening the agent with death if the wrongs mentioned were not remedied. There was a great uproar, in the midst of which Noah withdrew unnoticed.

When he got out into the air he was almost beside himself with grief and eagerness. He ran to the doctor's stables, and there was the bay pony in a stall, perfectly dry and unwearied. His first impulse was to seize her and ride away. But a man in the stable told him to be off, and he slowly went out.

But he must see how it was at home, and he hastened feverishly over the whole ten miles. The outlines of the valleys and the variegated bunches of buffalo-grass had no beauties for him on that homeward trip. He drew his breath more fiercely as he went on, and he burst in at the kitchen-door, and flung himself down before his wife in an agony.

The doctor had not been there, and little Wattena was rapidly growing worse. The poor mother had held her every moment, and the hot tears were rolling down her cheeks. The babe stretched out her hands to her father, and he took her. This would give Wattena a chance to bathe her face. And what a comfort it was to hold the hot, restless child to his breast! Why had he not accompanied the doctor to his home? Were the claims of his race more important than the claims of his family? At length his wife broke in upon these distressing meditations :

“ Would it not be well to go to the good Wagaza ?* ”

* Missionary.

He, surely, can help us, and give medicine to our poor child."

To be sure ; why had he not thought of that before ? Noah gave back the child to her mother, and, taking out the only pony he had left, he rode off in haste to the mission. Here was a help that would be freely given. That was, in itself, a comfort ; but would it be as efficient as the assistance of the regular doctor would have been ? He must hasten on and see.

CHAPTER IV.

A CAPTURE.

MEANWHILE down at Faber's some things had been going on that must be described. A Western ranch is a place *sui generis*. One is very like another, but any one is greatly dissimilar to anything else in the world. This one, of which the Faber brothers were proprietors, was a very good representative of its class.

The house itself was a low wooden shanty of three rooms, including a cupboard. The walls were very strongly made of undressed poles stuck into the ground, and heavy lumber, carted at great expense from the nearest railway station. The roof was flat, and covered by about a foot of earth, in which the grass and the wild flowers were growing. A window of a single sash in each room and a heavy door completed the architectural features. As to internal ornaments, a table and a half dozen stools, a number of rumpled blankets, and endless Texas saddles were the principal items. A few rifles hung on the walls, and in one corner was a stack of antelope and elk horns waiting for artistic mounting. A dozen dogs prowled around, mostly of the greyhound species, and evidently possessing no little sagacity, speed and fierceness.

The Faber brothers, owning the place and the herds of cattle out upon the hills, were rough, black-whiskered men, kind enough in their way, but very eager to be rich, and very bitter in their hatred of the Indians. They had

an eye upon the fertile lands of the reservation, and were by no means indifferent to the unworked silver deposits in the hills of its northwestern extremity. They had been particularly active in spreading reports unfavorable to the Indians, and many a dispatch in the *Chicago Times* or *New York Tribune* had its origin with them. They added fuel to every fire of contention that arose between the settlers and the Indians, and did everything in their power to cause a removal of the tribe, that the white men might rush in to possess their land. A half-dozen long-haired cowboys were in their employ, every one with a revolver at his hip, and they were ready to second any movement made in the direction of despoiling their Red neighbors.

It was on the afternoon of the glorious autumn day of the council. The Faber brothers, distinguished as Joe and Pete, were standing in one of the outside inclosures of the ranch discussing the possibilities of getting back the cow that Noah had taken.

"The cussed Injun has got her, sure," Joe was saying. "No one else would have known enough to take her instead o' any other."

"But I thought you said you branded her," answered Pete.

"I did say it. An' I did brand the cussed crittur. Though she scrooched so that the iron didn't make a very deep mark. Her hair is singed, though her hide may not be burned very deep."

"If we can only show the brand we are all right," said Pete. "We can prove that he stole her, and so a pretty excitement can be stirred up. It would sound well in the papers as that the Maha is risin' and perpetratin' robbery and cold-blooded murder on the poor settlers."

"That's our policy," replied his brother. "We must push it. 'Tain't no use mincin' matters when there's a hundred thousand acres o' good land in the question, and forty payin' mines. We've got to get the damned Injuns removed, and we must get up a report o' massacre and uprisin' to do it."

"But can't we do somethin' startling?" said Pete. "The stealin' o' cattle don't stir the Injuns up as it ought to. They take it altogether too quietly. Can't we do somethin' to bring on an encounter between the bucks an' the soldiers? Of course we would be all right. We would be the poor, inoffensive parties as needs protection and sympathy from the Government. No one would blame *us*."

"That's the right position to take. The Injuns stand in our way. They don't improve the soil. They don't advance civilization. They don't do nothin' right. 'Tain't in 'em to. They're only dogs in the manger. They're only good when dead. We ought to have their land, because we'd cultivate it—leastways, we'd let our stock run over it. Anyway, we'd work the mines, an' get rich if we could only get the Red devils out of the way."

"But, come, let's have supper," said Pete, who was always a hungry man.

The cowboys took turns in preparing the meals. One of them had now arranged the tin plates and cups upon the table around a huge dish of fried pork, a pan of heavy biscuit, and a pot of black coffee. Two jugs, also, were present, and formed a very necessary addition to a ranchman's feast; one contained whiskey, and the other molasses, or "larrup," as the cowboys call it. To this meal the Faber brothers sat down, and were joined by four of the cowboys, two of their number being

always left out on the range to watch the cattle. There was very little ceremony observed, the men eating heartily and fast, shovelling the hunks of crisp pork into their mouths with their knives, and gulping down great masses of sour biscuit. The "larrup" was freely used to assist the swallowing, and when a man was satisfied he took a cup of raw whiskey to assist the digestion.

When all had pushed back their stools, Pete Faber said to one of the boys :

"Sandy, you catch a broncho, and ride down to Rawhide. Spread the report all the way that the cussed Mahas has risen, an' been stealin' our stock. D'ye hear? Make it strong, Sandy. 'Tain't no call to mince matters. An' when you git to Rawhide have the agent telegraph to the Omaha and Chicago papers. Tell him one o' yer best yarns, Sandy. Massacre an' bloodshed, an' settlers fleein, an' all that, you know."

"Trust me for that, damn it," replied Sandy. Now, Sandy was a huge, loose-jointed Missourian, with very red hair, and very sore eyes, and very apparent streams of tobacco-juice running down at the corners of his mouth. He was noted as a fine rider, a great quarreller, and a dead shot. A particularly beautiful pearl-handled revolver was at his hip. He wore the usual leather pants, flannel shirt, and wide sombrero of the cowboys, and cut by no means an ungainly figure—at a distance—when he was on his favorite broncho, a spiteful, wall-eyed, gray stallion.

When it was known that Sandy was going down to the railway terminus the other cowboys crowded around him, and gave him their messages. There was much swearing and coarse talk. At one time there was danger of a fight, and revolvers were even drawn, but this was so common an occurrence that it aroused no particu-

lar notice. Everything was finally settled amicably, and Sandy was soon on his way toward Rawhide.

The radiant twilight had now drawn on. A steady wind was blowing from the south, reminding the Fabers of the trades, for they had once been sailors. They stood watching the strong leaps of the broncho bearing Sandy on his mission. The magnificent and illimitable blue of the heavens had no attraction to them, nor did they notice the brilliant meltings of many tints in the western sky, or the coming out of dim and timorous stars as the twilight advanced. They were wondering why they could see Sandy so long, and why he and his horse seemed to lose little in size as they hurried away. They knew it was some mysterious property of the high atmosphere of the West, and they had often noticed it before, yet it came to them with new force now. He was making a bee-line for Rawhide, there being neither road nor trail to guide him ; now he would suddenly disappear in a valley, and again he would be seen sweeping along the sharp edge of a divide, with the tinted amber of the horizon under his saddle-girths, but he seemed to be leaving no distance behind him ; in fact, at moments, he seemed to be coming back again. And there were times when the Fabers almost thought they could have hailed him. At length, however, he disappeared suddenly, as if blotted out of existence in a twinkling, and the brothers, heaving a sigh of mystery, turned to look at their stock.

There was a great herd of them. They had been driven in a little closer to the ranch as the night came on. Some were lazily cropping the buffalo-grass, some were bellowing moodily, and others had lain down fatigued after the day's tramp upon the range. Two cowboys on their ponies were watching them, and the

sparks from their pipes, fanned by the wind, made a touch of color in the gathering dun of evening. To the west the skies were still flooded with the brilliancy unmatched by the sunset of any other part of the world. But from the east and south, where the cattle lay, the creeping shadows were coming. Moment by moment the great, broad horns, and huge, square bodies of the Texan steers became less distinct, until at last they were mere motionless patches in the darkness and silence.

Yes, and there was something else beside the shadows creeping among them. The brothers saw it, and had been watching it. Was it an Indian? Only an Indian dare go among wild cattle on foot, and even then there is great danger. The cattle, so used to seeing men on horseback, will fly at one walking, and trample him to pieces. To be thrown from his pony in a herd is almost certain death to a cowboy. But if this be an Indian, it is unaccountable that the boys do not see him, and pierce him with balls. Ah, there is more color about the head-gear of this creeping figure than a buck would be likely to wear; it must be a woman—yes, it is Kathewana.

She came up slowly but boldly to the ranch. She was a frequent visitor there. On her way to or from the military post she was accustomed to stop there for food or a night's shelter. She had recently left Noah's, and was now on her way to the post. She was hungry, and asked the brothers sullenly for food.

"Be off with ye," said Joe. "We've lost enough by you and yourn. Here's one of our best cows stole by that cussed brother-in-law o' yourn. Git out o' the ranch, or I'll set the dogs on ye!"

"Wait a minute!" said Pete, whose mind seemed to have grasped something. "If ye don't mind, Joe, I'd

like ter give her a bite. Mebbe I can work a little scheme I have in my head through her."

"Oh, I don't care a cuss. Give her what she likes, only don't waste the whiskey on her. An' don't let the boys know as she's around, or they'll git her drunk, and make a fool o' her."

"I'll watch her," said Pete. "Now ye go in, Kathewana, and take some meat an' biscuit."

"What in the devil's name are ye after, Peter?" asked his brother, when she had gone in.

"Why, I want ter to do somethin' startlin', as I said awhile back. I'm tired o' foolin' around. Here we are wastin' month after month, an' year after year, and never gettin' no nearer to havin' the Injuns' reserve. The settlers are comin' in, and when the Injuns are finally removed, there'll be more o' the whites to divide up the diggin's and land with. Now, I'll tell you what I think. Let's make a bold push. Let's find out o' this squaw where the cussed buck, Noar, is, and let us catch him an' hang him fer a cattle thief. What d'ye think o' that?"

"Cussed good plan," said Joe, rolling his tobacco-cud around in his cheek. "You ought ter 'a been a general, Pete. Yer a cuss to plan, an' a cuss to fight."

"Very well, then; I'll go in an' manœuvre the maiden. You git a couple o' the boys ready with four bronchos, an' we'll be right off."

This expedition suited the temper and tastes of those wild ranchmen exactly, and in a very few moments Joe had the bronchos ready, with himself and a couple of their men already in saddle. Pete soon came out, and jumped upon the pony reserved for him, and cried:

"Couldn't be better, boys. Noar has gone to the mission for the missionary. Leastways, Kathewana says

Wattena was goin' to send him when he came home from the council. O' course he's gone. His papoose is sick. Cuss him, we'll make him sicker than any papoose ever was if we can catch him !"

They turned their horses' heads toward the reservation, and rode swiftly away, followed by a troop of dogs. The stars had now come out in such profusion that they could easily find their way. Pete took the lead, it being his scheme upon which they were engaged, and he was immensely important in feeling and attitude upon his fine pony. Indeed, the Fabers were noted for the strength and swiftness of their bronchos, and, as they swept along on their stern mission that night, the very horses seemed to enter into the impatience and ferocity of their masters.

And fortune, for once, was on the side of the assailant and evil-hearted party. They had barely got into concealment in the place where Pete thought they would intercept Noah on his way home, when a solitary horseman was seen approaching their hiding-place. What was the matter? Why was Noah alone? Could not the good Wagaza accompany him home to save the poor little Wattena? Would these cruel men prevent even the father from going to nurse his little one back to life and strength? Oh, they have sprung out of their hiding-place. They have surrounded him, and made him a captive. The roan has been stopped in her brisk gallop, and Noah has been rudely called back from a meditation of sadness and foreboding.

"Will you go with us, ye damned Injun?" Pete was asking. "Will you go with us quietly, or shall we tie you to your pony?"

"I will go," said Noah, sullenly.

Why did he not make a struggle of it? Why did he

so quietly submit to their arrest? Was all the manhood crushed out of him? Could he so easily forget the poor little babe that was tossing at home, and sobbing his name, in the agonies of the fever? Ah, he was not yet ready for resistance! The war party could not yet claim him as a convert. He still thought it better to endure any individual wrong and suffering rather than precipitate war between the soldiers and the innocent of his tribe—a war which could have only one ending.

So he went along with them quietly. He could not imagine what the purposes of the ranchmen were, but he did not think they meant to kill him. Even if they should take his life, he thought it was better to die with a clear conscience than to resist and bring death upon a large number of his tribe, and, after all, only be shot. Did not his Christian principles teach him to suffer any personal injury rather than wrong others? Wakanda E-zhi-ga* had acted in this way, and he felt glad to follow His example. His heart sank within him, and he felt the peculiar, sickening sensation brought on by deep misery, when he thought of little Wattena. Oh, how she would call for him! How anxiously his wife would look for him, and strain her ears to catch the first sound of the roan's sharp gallop. But he could not go to them, and their hope must die. He could but commend them to the good Wakanda, and to the skill of the missionary. For he had succeeded in finding the Wagaza, thank God for that! and he had promised to ride over to Wattena in an hour. All might still be well; his babe might recover, and he might be able to escape, or the agent might interpose for him, and secure his liberation. At all events, he quietly put the whole matter into

* The Son of God.

Wakanda's hands and felt strong and willing for anything.

The roan had no difficulty in keeping up with the bronchos, swift and tireless as they were. Just as the midnight stars wheeled into place the party arrived at the ranch. Noah's arms were tied behind him, and he was placed in a strong cupboard, with which the ranch was provided, and the door locked upon him. The Fabers thought there was no danger of an immediate pursuit, and had determined to wait until the next day at noon before starting for the scene of the hanging. They would be required to go some miles before they could find a tree large enough for their purpose. Meanwhile, they wrapped themselves in their blankets, and lay down upon the bare boards for a few hours' sleep.

CHAPTER V.

AN INDIAN COURTSHIP.

THAT same afternoon Strong Foot had dressed himself with particular care to pay a visit to the little maiden he loved. The beautiful sunset, so meaningless to the Fabers, had been full of bright hopes and images to him. He had walked gayly over the grass, his looking-glass dangling at his side, and had disdained, in true Indian fashion, to notice any of the people whom chance threw in his way. He was compelled to go near the camp of the soldiers, whom Kathewana had mentioned as coming to the reserve to hunt, and they had hailed him with derisive shouts, but he had not even looked in their direction. Of course he knew how many there were of them ; no Indian would fail to discover that, though he had not looked upon one of their faces, nor seen one of their figures. But he was on his way to his little love, and not even a friendly invitation would have induced him to exchange a word, much less a disdainful challenge.

Little Star was a bright-faced, *petite* maiden, with very deep eyes, and a sweet, soft voice. She had evidently prepared herself with great care for the coming of her lover, and what few stray bits of ribbon, of all colors, she possessed were arranged promiscuously in her shining black hair. Her dress was of the cheapest calico, and was made with very little taste ; yet it could not entirely destroy or hide the charms of a dainty and well-

rounded figure. She had attended the school at the mission, and had grasped a few ideas of personal cleanliness, a thing of which the great majority of the women of the tribe were stupidly ignorant. Because of this schooling she insisted that the courtship, pressed with so much vigor by Strong Foot, should be conducted on something like Christian principles. It is astonishing how quickly the maidens of a half-civilized race take up with the bewitching luxury of flirtation. Other courtships of the tribe were still carried on after the old heathen fashion of barter and sale, with an unromantic willingness on the part of the bride. Little Star determined to have all this remedied. And she did her part well, though, unknown to her, Strong Foot and her father had arranged a financial transaction suspiciously like the old traditions of the tribe.

The home of the maiden was rather an inferior affair. It consisted of a dug-out in the side of a hill, with a large tepee staked before it. A mass of bedclothes of various hues, and much the worse for weather, was piled in one corner of the dug-out portion ; while the outer apartment, as being in some sense the parlor for the reception of company, was adorned with a few bundles of well-dressed furs. The cooking was done out of doors in fair weather ; in bad weather there is a strong suspicion to show that very little cooking was indulged in. At all events, the abode was a very good specimen of the home of an Indian who is afraid of removal to the Indian Territory, and does not consider it worth while to build a snug house.

On this particular evening Little Star had manœuvred to have an unusually bright fire built before the tepee. Both her father and mother had noticed this, and knew very well what it indicated. And both were by no

means displeased. The mother admired Strong Foot as a brave and well-built Maha, who would properly brow-beat and domineer his squaw. The father had the promise of three ponies and three cows, as a wedding-present from his new son-in-law, and that acted as a magic magnifier of the young man's advantages. Consequently, when he put in an appearance, he was received with great cordiality by the parents. Even Little Star, on this particular evening, relaxed her usual coquetry, and nodded and smiled when he sat down before the fire. This was the extent of the tenderness shown on either side during the evening.

"And what think you of the council?" asked Umpanuga,* the father of Little Star.

"It was the same old story," said Strong Foot. "The same demands were made from our side, and the same indifferent silence preserved by the agent. In my opinion, there is only one recourse. We must go to war, and show ourselves Mahas."

"What prevents you going to war?" asked Umpanuga. "Your party is strong and fiery, and the white soldiers are not far off. Why not strike them a blow? I am an old man, but I can die. I could rather die in the good old ways of my fathers than turn Christian. I would rather die in war than in peace."

"Our party is all ready. But we are held back by the remainder of the tribe. Some of the older ones are content to let the present continue as the past has been. Some of the younger members, like Noah, have turned Christian, and we hear nothing but peace and self-sacrifice from them. So that the hands of the war party are tied."

* Sacred elk : this is the meaning of this honored Indian name.

“Wait a little longer,” replied the older man. “Noah will not always be so timid and base. There is the fire of the wolf in him. He is subdued by hunger. But the wolf will some day snarl and show his teeth, and bite.”

So they talked on. They were joined, from time to time, by other members of the war party, until, at length, quite a little company had gathered round the snapping fire. Wood was plenty at the heads of the little ravines of the reservation, though the trees were kept small by the prairie fires. The cottonwoods grew to the greatest size, but did not make such good fuel as the wild thorn. Piles of this latter were at hand, and the young men threw on frequent armfuls to keep the snapping, glowing fire in the best condition, both for light and heat. The conversation was animated, and, for the most part, mirthful; though, at times, they discussed some phase of their relation to the whites, and then they became sullen and belligerent. Their hunting and fishing excited most interest. The wild blood was still in their veins, and they could not tear themselves from the sports of their ancestors. However, they took as much interest in their stock and crops as you could expect from those who cannot tell what moment they will be robbed of a part or the whole of their possessions. Noah was frequently laughed at, as a half-Wagha, who was afraid to show himself a Maha. This ridicule did not please old Umpanuga, who tried, more than once, to check it. At last he said :

“You are doing Noah wrong. He is as brave as any of you. Do you know how he came to have his name?”

“No,” they cried, in chorus. What camp-fire is complete without a story? The Arabs, we are told, spend hours crouching beside a little blaze, on their vast

deserts, and listening to mystical narratives. In fact, all the nomadic tribes of the world, and all races of mankind, in their nomadic and pastoral state have, from time immemorial, passed the hours of the early night rehearsing tales of wonder and adventure. The Indians are not an exception to the rule. The old men of the tribes are skilled story-tellers, and delight all listeners with their simple and fervid recital of hunts and battles and personal adventures.

Umpanuga's proposal to tell the story of the giving of a name to Noah was hailed, therefore, with eager pleasure. Every Indian child or youth is named from some peculiar circumstance or incident connected with his early years, or from some distinguishing personal mark or feature. Few of the young men present, if any, knew what was to be associated with the name Noah. They regarded it as something entirely outside their ordinary atmosphere, just as the person bearing it was unique and unexplainable in his character and feelings. Umpanuga, therefore, eased himself back on a bundle of furs that Little Star had placed for his comfort, and thus began his narrative :

“ When Noah was a boy he went to live with a white settler down on the Missouri bottom. His mother had died of the fever, and his father had been killed by the craven Pawnees. This father was a brave and noble Maha. He was my friend and companion. I loved him much. But he loved the Wagha, and I hated them. When the Pawnees were at war with the white men he went down to help and save the settlers. He entered into any personal danger to rescue his new friends. Once, he led a party of Pawnees a long way through the woods, kindling fires to allure them on. This saved a village of the Wagha, but it was death to Noah's

father. He knew it would be so, but he was willing. And when, at last, the Pawnees overtook him, he died bravely, singing his Dta-wá-e,* and giving up himself to Wakanda. I praise his goodness, but I hate those whom he chose as his friends, and who were the cause of his death.”

He paused a moment, and gave the fire a kick. The bright sparks from the brier-boughs mounted to the sky, and lit up the dusky faces of the intensely expectant company. It is impossible to retain, in a translation, the vivid and picturesque language he employed in telling his story. I can only give you the bare meaning of his words :

“ This is the sort of blood that runs in Noah’s veins. You and I do not understand his feelings, but we must not be too hard with him. We think the untamed eagle grander and nobler than the house-bird. It may be because we have never suffered captivity. Noah, when once he was left alone in the world, went to live with the family of a settler, as I have said. It was his choice, of course, for an orphan would share the food of our tribe as well as any one else, as you all know. I do not defend the choice. I only say he is not as cowardly and base as you think him.

“ This settler’s cabin was on the bottom of the Missouri, and his fields of corn extended all around it. He was a hard-working man, and Noah was faithful to him, and they raised great crops. But they were always afraid that the river, in its March or June rise, would sweep away their cabin, and destroy them all. Sometimes the angry and swollen waters would come to the very door of the cabin, and the swift, hard cakes of ice

* Death song.

would crackle and grind at them, as if they were hungry for them. I have often seen the river extend the whole five miles between the bluffs. It would be either when the ice first breaks up in the spring, or when the great melt in the mountains far up the river comes. The current would be swifter than shongas* can run, and the crackling ice would sweep even the thickets of willows away as if they were grass. Over all, the frightened wild-ducks and brant would be sailing in triangular bands, and the sun would be shining on their bright backs and breasts. But the river itself was fierce and cruel. It seemed to me to snarl, and snap, and lap its banks as I have seen rows of hungry wolves snarl and hiss around a dying shonga. Of course, if one of those cakes of ice were to strike a house it would crush it as your foot would crush the egg of a prairie-hen. Sometimes the current would carry a house down-stream bodily. You remember, yourselves, that, last year, a house in which the Wagha's missionaries preached went down the river past our reservation, its bell ringing dismally as the building rocked to and fro.

"This was the danger, and the white man with whom Noah lived knew it. One day he was compelled to go away from home. He left Noah in charge of his horses and cows, and told his wife to look to the river, and, if it rose, to escape, with her six little children, to the bluff. This bluff was about a mile away. Well, the river had been very high, but seemed to be falling during the afternoon, and at night the settler's wife thought all was safe, and went to bed as usual. Noah attended to the horses and cows, saw that they were properly tied and had plenty of hay, and then, taking a last look

* Ponies.

at the river, went to his bed in the upper story of the cabin."

The fire had burned low, and Umpanuga paused until some of the young men piled on the brier-boughs. His wife and Little Star had come out of the door of the tepee, where they had first sat, and had crept close to the circle of listeners—the maiden happening to make her way almost to Strong Foot's side. When the bright sparks mounted again, in fan-shaped glory, into the sky, Umpanuga resumed his narrative :

"After Noah had slept some time he was wakened by what seemed, at first, to him to be the murmur of the wind among the pines. It was something stronger and fiercer than this, however. This Noah was convinced of as he heard a trickling sound round the corners of the house. He sprang from his bed, and dressed himself as soon as possible. Being now awake, he could hear the cows bellowing, and the horses stamping and whinnying in their stalls. He knew what all this meant, and, striking a light as soon as he could, he ran down into the cabin kitchen. The water was already six inches deep on the floor. There was no storm in the sky. As he looked out everything was bright and beautiful, in the wide-spread glory of a June night in Nebraska. But he knew that death was staring them in the face, and it was not the less to be dreaded because it was coming so softly and slowly.

"He cried out to the settler's wife to get herself and her children dressed, and then went out to see how things looked. The water was running four foot deep before the cabin-door. He thought he could get over to the wood-pile to make a raft ; but, wading out a little way, he found the current so swift that he could hardly keep his feet, and concluded it would be better to save his

strength to carry the children to the bluff. So he went back to the house, and found the mother standing in the kitchen, with white lips and frightened eyes, with her children about her. 'Save these first,' she said. Noah took a couple of them, and started for the bluff. As he went out an ice-cake struck the corner of the cabin, and tilted it over several inches into the current.

"The first trip was not hard to make, and on the second Noah also carried two children. But this time he was almost swept away, under his double burden, and he reached the refuge, panting and nearly exhausted. The water was rising every moment. He could hear the poor beasts in their stables crying out for help, but he had none to give them. He sprang again into the tide, and came back to the bluff with one of the remaining children. The mother had stayed in the cabin all this time. She was holding her little babe to her breast. It was sweet-faced and beautiful, and had the yellow hair that we Red Men admire so much. The cabin was tottering now, and before Noah came back for the last time the mother ventured out. Ah, the current was too swift for her strength, and she went down before it. Noah was near enough to catch the child, but he could not save the mother. She went down the river with a shriek, her white face tossing on the current. It was for saving these children that the agent called him Noah. What it means I do not know, but it is something out of the Wagha's Book."*

While he had been speaking, little Kathewana had crept into the group. Did she know about the capture of Noah? Would she tell these young men where this brave friend of the white man then was?

* The Bible.

CHAPTER VI.

JUDGE LYNCH ON THE BENCH.

THE news of the capture spread like wildfire among the ranchmen. The anxiety to secure the Indians' possessions was so great that so signal a cause for strife as the hanging of a buck would not be long in becoming known. Who spread the first news nobody knew ; but all were eager to see the "cussed red-skin" hanged. Every minute the company increased, until there were enough present for an annual round-up when the time of the start came.

Noah was brought out of the cupboard and placed upon the little roan, and the Faber brothers prepared to guard him. The poor fellow was haggard and distressed, having spent the hours of rest in an anxious dread for little Wattena. Often had he seemed to hear her voice piteously calling him in the sad night-wind sobbing round the corners of the ranch. More than once did her great, dark eyes seem to be peering at him out of the tremulous darkness in the corner. He needed all the consolations that his religion could give him as the slow hours crept on. And he abandoned himself without reserve to his faith. Not once did doubt or hesitation cross his mind. He knew nothing of the theories of dogmatics, but he was as sure of Wakanda's existence and love as of the reality of the sweeping hills upon which he had chased the jack-rabbit and wapiti. He took it for granted, in his simple way, that all this darkness

would become light by and by ; but, oh, it was so hard and dismal while it lasted ! He pictured to himself one of those stormy nights when he had been out on the slippery divides. It would be all bewilderment, and he would not know where his next step would land him. Then there would come a sudden blaze of pale light far up in the northern sky, as the wind shifted ; the sweeping rain would drift, muttering, away, and the rest of his way would be calm and clear. And he thought, also, of those winter camps, where he and his fellow-hunters would take refuge from the cold. The snow would silently pile great, impassable walls around them ; hunger, and even starvation, would follow, until death would stare them in the face. Then, almost in a moment, the strange Chinooka, or hot wind, would spring up, and grow in volume until it would whistle and shriek in the pines, and in a very few hours a path would be melted through the snow. Would a similar deliverance come to him now ? Out of all this pain and misery would there come peace and happiness ? Would the dear little Wattenena be spared to him, and could he escape to her ; or would they both meet in the good land before the throne of Wakanda ? He tried to think that it would not matter—but he was human—how could he ? He tried to fancy what the good land would be, but in this, also, he failed. And so he came back, again and again, to this : he would commit Wattenena and himself to Wakanda's love, and just trust and go forward. So that now, as he sat upon the roan between the Fabers, a supernatural calmness was struggling with distress upon his face and in his quick, deep eyes.

The company, as it started away, presented a romantic, even a brilliant appearance. The cowboys had strung to their dress every bit of bright color they possessed.

Their sombreros were, in many instances, embroidered rudely with silk and cords of many tints, and round them all were hat-bands of braided sheep-skin, mahoganied by the weather. They all wore flannel shirts, flung wide at the throat. The tough leather pants, secured by a belt at the waist, and heavy boots completed their dress. Most of them wore long hair and full beards, and their faces, hands and necks were as dark as Noah's from exposure to the weather. Next to the men in importance were their ponies. These were all small and spiteful, but wonderfully active, and full of nerve and courage. They were of all colors, white and clay-bank predominating, and wall-eyes were very common. They were bony and ungainly, but responded instantly to the lash, or the heavy spurs which all the cowboys wore at their heels. The saddles were huge, and elaborately ornamented; they were secured by two braided girths, and carried lassoes at their pommels, and a rolled blanket or overcoat at their crup. The bridles were made of braided sheepskin, ornamented with leaves, cut from the same material, and armed with great steel bits. In many cases, the woven reins were continued into a short whip which fell at the rider's side, and could do service in more ways than one. Everything about a ranch-horse must be braided, from the animal's tail to the front piece of the bridle, and wherever adornment can by any means be patched on it must not be neglected.

There was little form or regularity observed in the line of advance. For a time they rode two abreast, but at length the desire to try the speed of their bronchos became too strong for such methodical march, and there were many exciting races over the short, crisp grass. There were many contests, also, as to superiority in hurling the lasso, and in shooting the plover with their

revolvers ; and the shouting and laughter would have given one the impression that they were out for a holiday spree, rather than for the hanging of a fellow-mortal. A close guard was kept over Noah by the Faber brothers and two or three of their immediate followers ; but the rest of the company presented the appearance of a brilliantly-dressed lot of cowboys out upon a lark. And, let it be said right here, under the very shadow of the great crime they were about to commit, that there is no class of men more thoroughly generous and noble-hearted than the ranchmen and cowboys of the Western plains. They are profane and ungodly to the farthest extent ; a dispute over a spoonful of "larrup" or molasses will bring on bloodshed in five minutes, if not promptly checked, and they have an inveterate hatred of the Indians, which nothing but an equality of the Red Men with them before the law can ever pacify. But for true kindness to any one in distress, except an Indian, they are unmatched ; and for self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of their employers, they are the wonder of all who know them well. This much I am bound to say, in order to give a correct picture of the problem of the plains.

It was one of those glorious days for which northern Nebraska is famous. The sun had risen, like an Oriental prince, to scatter jewels upon the tufts of buffalo-grass, and shower brightness and beauty on the hillsides, and over the graceful crowns of the sweeping divides. The prairie-dogs were chattering busily over their trampled burrows, and the jack-rabbits were sunning themselves under the dun clay banks worn away by the spring freshets. Noah could not help noticing all these things, as they shone under the light of what might be his last day. How bright and fair it all looked ! Could there

be anything more beautiful, or as beautiful, in the world beyond? He was about to see; but it seemed almost incredible. And he was amazed to find his captors talking of commonplace things.

"We ought ter meet Sandy before long," Joe Faber was saying. "He's had time enough to get back from town. Wonder what news he'll have."

"Nothin' like the news we can give him," answered Pete. "I hope he made the story strong. We must see that the *Chicago Times* gits this yer day's work in right: 'Great cattle-thief hung,' we must word it. 'The terror of the plains at length brought to justice.' That'll sound first-class, eh?"

"Yes, that'll do. We must set forth as how the law-abiding citizens at last got indignant, an' organized a posse to capture their man. He had a regular trial, of course, an' was found guilty. He was ordered ter be hung until he was dead, to the limb of a cottonwood in Striver's Hollow. That was the sentence, ye understand. Damn me, if it ain't all plain enough."

"Ter change the subject," said his brother, "did you tell Tom and Sloper to drive the cattle in bunches over to Brown's range? This yer day's work will raise a devilish storm, an' we must have our stock out of all harm's way. We must clear out, ourselves, for a few days, an' we want what is valuable around our ranch saved, too. Let 'em burn down the cabin, if they want to, they can't destroy the range. It'll be ours, and their land will be ours, too, some day. Look—there is Sandy!"

Joe had been nodding assent to the several questions and assertions of his brother, and now they both turned their attention to a horseman who was dashing over the prairies toward them. It was evidently Sandy. It was

his way of sitting in the saddle. It was his way of handling the reins. It was his pony's way of kicking the miles behind him. And when he came up to them, it was Sandy's own surprise that was pictured on his freckled face. And they were Sandy's own oaths that issued from his tobacco-stained lips when the whole thing was explained to him. No, there was no news, except that there was to be a big dance that night in Jim Carlin's saloon and dance-house.

"All right, boys," cried Pete Faber. "When we git this business in hand over with, we'll ride into town, and see the gals as Jim Carlin has on the carpet."

This project was hailed with cheers, and the party rode forward, even more eagerly, toward Striver's Hollow. They wanted to have the temporary hindrance removed, that they might go on to the revel at Carlin's. Poor Noah half heard and half did not hear all this. His thoughts were busy with Wattena his wife, and the little babe and the future. He was stunned and bewildered, and all this seemed like the passing dream of a summer's night. It must be so with all of us; when the moment of death approaches there is a benumbing and soothing delusion sent to quiet our forebodings, and to make it possible for us to go the way of all the earth. Christians might give a theological name to this. But the most worldly of us must admit its reality and blessed influence.

The men became more orderly and quiet as they approached Striver's. The solemnity of death was asserting its influence upon even their rough hearts. They treated Noah with a little respect; and when, at length, they came under the cottonwoods, they gave him a few moments of privacy to chant his Dta-wá-e, and arrange his thoughts. Noah was deeply grateful for this. He

wanted to pray for himself, and for Wattena and the poor sick babe. It was all that he could do now. But how could he have those cruel men hear his words? To be sure, they kept a close watch upon him, as they gulped down their whiskey, at a little distance, but that did not matter. He knelt down at the foot of the tree, where he was to be executed, and poured out his soul to God. Not a tear escaped his eyelids, and there was not a tremble to his lips; he had conquered all that, for he would not have the Wagha see him overcome. But in quiet Indian whispers, his picturesque native tongue serving him to good purpose now, he told the kind Father all about it. Would not He care for the helpless widow and the fatherless babe? Would not He see that they did not want? Had He not promised to do this very thing in his Book? Yes, Noah felt that he could trust the strong and faithful Wakanda, even in this sore hour. He was glad that he had not joined the war-party, though they had taunted him with being a coward. He could die with a clear conscience. He had not done any one harm; that was a great comfort. He arose quite comforted and strong. Then seating himself on a pile of dried cottonwood boughs, he covered his head with his blanket, and chanted his Dta-wá-e, swaying backward and forward.

“My life now goes out like a half-burned knot. Wattena shall mourn and wail in the little cabin, like the night-wind moaning round the hollow tree-trunk. The little babe cries for me in vain. The land of my fathers is desolate, and the Wagha have driven us to ruin and despair. O Wakanda, I come to thee!”

His chant was cut short by the ranchmen, who looked at each other a moment, as if to get the signal, and then rushed simultaneously upon him. Sandy's lasso was

thrown over the lowest limb of the tree, Noah's hands were tied behind him, the fatal noose was thrown over his head, and, with a cry that was more a scream than a cheer, the men drew him up. The end of the rope was secured so as to hold him in the air, and Sandy built a fire under him to add to his tortures.

“Now for Jim Carlin's!”

They left him convulsively stiffening in the air, and in another minute their party was a shadow of crimson and dust upon the horizon.

CHAPTER VII.

IS IT A RESCUE ?

Just as they disappeared another cloud came sweeping up from the opposite horizon. It came on, as if pushed by the north wind. There were flashes of color in this cloud, also ; and, as it came nearer, there were bright head-dresses, and gaudy blankets, and glinting rifles to be seen. And there were ponies, with their brave little ears thrust back, and their tough nostrils bursting with grit and nerve, and their strong knees hinging up and down to drive the miles behind them.

Between the disappearing and the approaching party the stiffened body of Noah swung dismally in the wind.

A few moments more brought the rescuers under the cottonwood. Ah, little Kathewana had done her errand well ! The wooing at Umpanuga's fireside had ended in a sudden arming and mounting to prevent the slaughter of their fellow-tribesman. They had ridden hard ; were they too late ? More than one pony had broken down under the headlong gallop, and more than one eager rider had thus been forced to give up the chase. But had it been all in vain ?

Strong Foot was in command, and by his direction some of the young Mahas scattered the blazing fire-brands under Noah, and some cut the body down. At first it seemed that life was extinct. Noah's strong, handsome face was perfectly calm and cold, and his brawny, well-knit figure lay still and lifeless upon the

trampled grass. Still they did not cease their efforts to restore him, and, after a short time, they had the unspeakable happiness to hear him groan. He seemed to resent their endeavors to call him back to this world. He had gone so far upon the heavenly journey that he did not wish to return. Earthly loves and hopes and plans had given place to something higher and holier, and it was like awakening from a celestial dream to be forced to live again. One groan only made way for another, and it was with a very poor grace, indeed, that he finally opened his eyes upon the anxious, familiar faces bending over him.

“He lives ! He lives !” they cried.

To rescue him was their immediate object, and now that this had been accomplished they sat down spontaneously, as if undetermined what to do next. Their panting ponies were standing around them, on wide-spread legs, too fatigued to graze. The brilliant beauty of the autumn day was flooding them, and, as they sat under its light, they presented a striking picture. Some had daubed themselves with the war-paint ; some had hastily assumed their war-bonnets of horse-hair and colored feathers ; and all were decked out with the tight band of scarlet flannel around the forehead, and with what rags of ribbon they could catch up. Like the colored race, the Indians are fond of dashing colors ; and, like our own more cultured society, they cling with tenacity to race traditions. It was as much the proper thing for these bucks to be arrayed in this fashion, when out upon such an errand, as for the belle or the dandy to wear the fashionable tint and cut in our own polished drawing-rooms. And I venture to say that they felt the same pride and satisfaction in doing it.

However, they realized now that they were in the

crisis of their existence. Here was a pretext for war with the whites. They had never been at war with them ; but why should they not now assert their rights ? Even Noah would now join them. Surely he had learned a lesson. And as soon as he is able to speak he will, undoubtedly, favor an immediate advance to the fort or the Agency—wherever the first attack would better be made. They recognized him as a leader in all other exploits, and had longed to have him lead them in war. Now was their time, and they determined, silently and individually, to improve it.

On all important occasions the Indian must make a speech. Hence they had not sat long upon the ground before one of their number—it was he who was to have married little Kathewana—arose, and, wrapping a blanket round his citizen's clothes, said :

“ It is known to our simple race, as well as to more polished peoples, that sin is found out by its own power. If you crush a rose in your hand, by and by the thorn will pierce you. On the contrary, if you tame even a coyote, in some moment of carelessness you will find it tugging at your throat. So is it with sin. Whether you corrupt the innocent, or seek to familiarize the evil, the result is the same—ruin and disgrace and death. It has been so with the Wagha in dealing with my poor Kathewana. They crushed her as a tender little flower, but she has been the means of bringing us to the rescue of our friend. She told us of their wickedness ; she incited us to arms ; she will be avenged if we go to war. And why should we not go to war ? Is there any reason for our remaining inactive ? Do the Wagha deserve forbearance or mercy at our hands ? Look at Noah, and tell me ! The noble bear may let the fox do many a sly, mean thing before it turns upon the offender, but

when the bear's blow is struck it is all over with the fox. Let us have no more smiles and promises and treachery. Let us strike the bear's blow, and see the issue. We know what submission brings us ; let us try war. It cannot be more terrible."

His speech called forth a long-continued murmur of applause. Even Nôah listened to the latter part of it, seeing which, some of his friends propped him up on a couple of blankets. The whirl in his brain was becoming less and less now, and he was able to look up at the limb of the cottonwood from which he had lately been swinging. Could it be possible that he was so near death as that ? It seemed a year to him since he had made his prayer and sung his Dta-wá-e. What was little Wattena doing all this time, and why was he not already on his way to her and his suffering, anxious wife ? There was the little roan grazing, wonderingly, at a short distance. He took a hasty glance all around, and looked up sharply into the magnificent sky to make sure that he was not dreaming. Ah, yes, it was all right. He was on the earth yet, and he took a long breath to prove that no lasso was around his neck. Why should he linger when the little babe needed him so much ? Ah, another of his rescuers was about to speak, and he must stay to hear his words.

The speaker was a young man who had recently joined the war party. He was a straightforward fellow, with an immense depth of chest, and a strong, self-reliant poise of the head. There are the same differences of appearance and physique among the Red Men as among the whites, and there is the same comparative range of mental traits. A glance would show you that this speaker was an honest, matter-of-fact fellow, who would die at the stake before he would do a wrong. Yet he said :

“I now am sure that we must go to war. You know that I have been slow to join you. I have sat in my tepee, and thought, when you have been over at the council-fire. But now I am with you. The prairie lynx does not fight until it is forced to ; but then it is as fierce as the she-wolf. My plan would be to go directly to the Agency. That is upon our own ground, and we have a right to do with it as we please. Let us tear every building down. Let us scatter the stores that the agent has gathered together. Why should he enjoy all the benefits of our land ? I think that even Noah will join us in this work.”

All eyes were now turned in his direction, and Noah cleared his throat to make a reply. Before he could speak, however, they were all startled by a cry from Strong Foot. He was pointing out upon the prairie ; and, glancing in the direction indicated, they all saw a solitary horseman riding swiftly toward them. It was Sandy, who had been sent back to see how matters were under the cottonwood. He had not yet seen the Indians, and came on with the speed of the wind.

“I will have his blood !” said Strong Foot.

The others nodded their encouragement as their leader crept away to find a pony. He selected Noah’s roan as being the swiftest and freshest in the party, and springing to her back, rode cautiously out upon the prairie.

It was at this moment that Sandy first saw the company under the tree. He stiffened himself in the saddle, then drew up the reins, and slowly brought his gray broncho to a halt. With his sharp eye he swept the prairie, as if wondering whether he would better go forward or retreat. The Indians had always been friendly to him personally, and he had often seen them bear as cruel wrong as the ranchmen had just done them without

resentment. His puzzle, however, was put an end to by Strong Foot, who uttered a fearful yell and galloped down upon him. Sandy wheeled his pony, and with whip and spurs put him to his greatest speed to escape, bending down upon his neck, and casting sidelong glances at his pursuer.

All the bucks now joined the chase—all but Noah. He was too much exhausted and bewildered to accompany them, even if he had desired to. What were his feelings at that moment? Not even he could describe them. He could not keep down an intoxicating sense of triumph and revenge, now that the active agent of his hanging was about to be captured. At least Noah took it for granted that the little roan would overtake Sandy's gray. Had he not often matched her against the other ponies of the tribe, and had she once been beaten? Had he not run down even the jack-rabbits with her, when he had had a fair start and a smooth stretch of ground? So he took it for settled that the Wagha would be captured, and hung with the same lasso that had recently been around his own neck. Would he rejoice to see him dangling in the air? Would he take pleasure in his twitching limbs and stiffening joints and dying agonies? Yes, at that moment he thought he would. Had he not cruelly suffered at the hand of the Wagha? He clenched his fists and ground his teeth, and even prayed Wakanda that Sandy might be captured. The bewildering whirl of his brain was slowly hardening into a firm hatred of the white men, and a steady purpose to be revenged.

Meanwhile, the chase was going on. Their course was an oblique one toward the horizon, so that Noah could follow them with his eye from where he sat. The white man had a quarter of a mile's start, but the Indian's

pony was the fresher, and, perchance, the swifter. Every now and then Sandy would lash the sides of his broncho, as if he felt that he was losing ground; but Strong Foot sat erect, silent and confident. The roan was a splendid picture, her nose thrust out, her mane flying, flakes of foam falling on her breast, and her sturdy legs working like machinery. The bits of color with which both were ornamented shone brightly in the still evening light, and the rifle flung over Strong Foot's shoulder glinted now and then as the sun caught one of its faces. After them came the howling bucks, in a scattered band, their feathers and war-bonnets streaming in the wind. It was such a picture as can be seen only on the plains. The strife would nowhere else occur; the brave, gritty ponies cannot be found in any other part of the world, and you must have the vast stretches of crisp buffalo-grass and the splendid air and the illimitable sky which only Nebraska and Dakota possess. Noah gazed upon it enraptured. It was hard for even him to believe that it was not all a panorama, in which hatred and revenge and lust for blood were only pictured.

Once he saw the roan stumble. Strong Foot gave her a cuff on the neck, more in encouragement than impatience. It was only for a moment; some sandhill or prairie-dog hole had thrown her off her guard. But now she was at it again. The foam was a little freer from her nostrils, that was the only sign of fatigue about her. But with the gray broncho it was different. Sandy was lashing him more frequently and cruelly now, but the poor beast was evidently upon his last legs. He had gone so far that day that he was unequal to the terrible strain of this pursuit. Noah thought he could see blood falling from his trembling nostrils upon the bright sod. Yes, and there he stumbles! He rolls over—dead!

Sandy draws his revolver, and stands over him. His brave horse has done his best to save him, has given his life in the attempt ; he must now defend himself.

Strong Foot eases up the roan, and alights from her back. He is savagely deliberate. Will he shoot the cowboy with his rifle, and leave him to die beside the brave gray ? He is a splendid shot, and could keep out of range of Sandy's revolver until he had riddled him with bullets. See, he swings his rifle over his head, and brings it to arm, ready for use. He shouts something to the Wagha, who impatiently shakes his head. Then there is a shot. Sandy jumps a little, and the revolver falls to the ground. His right arm has been pierced by a bullet ; but he resolutely picks up the weapon with his left hand, and fires a hopeless shot at his enemy. It is all so matter-of-fact. Strong Foot is so cool and slow about it. He sees that another shot must be fired, and, throwing down the loading lever of his Remington, he brings it back with a slam, and draws his gun to his shoulder. Again he shouts to the cowboy, and again there is an impatient shake of the head. Then comes the third shot, and Sandy's other arm hangs limp and useless at his side.

By this time the bucks have all come storming up, and they make a rush upon the defenceless cowboy. He is stolid and indifferent now, and they seat him behind one of their number, and come slowly back to the cotton-wood. Noah awaited them with a beating heart. He felt a thrilling satisfaction in the thought that now the personal outrage done him was to be avenged. He got up on his knees, and yelled as if he were a madman. But how about the consequences of this rash act ? Was he ready to go with his comrades into a general war ?

This thought came to him, but he brushed it aside to give full license to the present fierce joy.

The excitement among the Indians grew more and more intense as they approached the moment of execution. Sandy was seated in the very spot where Noah had but now awaited his death, and his legs were carefully tied together. A flask of whiskey that he had in his pocket was seized and eagerly drained by his captors. A great fire was built under the cottonwood, and the bucks began to dance about it, howling and yelling in the most frightful fashion. All the calm reason that they had manifested before Sandy appeared had now left them, and they were transformed into frantic savages. These sudden transformations are a prominent trait of the Indian character, and give cause for the violent misunderstandings to which it has been subject. These very men, who were so orderly and rational a few moments ago, were now tearing their own flesh, and giving Sandy a pinch or a light stab now and then.

Then came the final tragedy. Whether Noah took any part in it or not he could never tell. He remembered the white, startled face of the Wagha, and his frantic struggles while the lasso was being placed round his neck. He remembered the frightful scream he uttered as he was drawn into the air. He saw him riddled with bullets, and knew that a great fire was kindled under his feet. Then all was confusion. He was galloping away, with the brave little roan under him. That he was certain of. And he heard his comrades crying :
“ On to the Agency ! On to the Agency ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE WATTENA.

THE relapse of even the most civilized people into a temporary barbarism is the most natural thing in the world. Your scientific friend would call it "reversal to type." He would quote Mr. Darwin, who gives us many examples of the application of this universal law. He would tell you that a flock of pigeons let loose upon an uninhabited island will, in the course of a few years, lose all their bright colors, and all their various markings, and result in a race of monotonously gray birds, precisely like the original wild pigeon. He would point out to you the fact that the most beautiful domestic plants and the most useful vegetables will return, if neglected, even for a short time, to the low types out of which they have sprung. The luscious strawberry will degenerate into the small, sour berry of the hills, and the fragrant rose will become the dog-rose of the hedges. The same is true of animals. Turn out your cart-horse among a herd of his wild fellows, and, before the scars of the harness have disappeared from his back, or the last shoe-nail worn out of his hoofs, he will be as fiery and untamed as the others.

Man himself is but a higher animal, and is subject to the same reversal to type. He is brother to your cart-horse and cousin to your pigeon. Your scholarly and overworked man of letters will feel a wild enthusiasm surging in his veins when he plunges into the woods for

a holiday hunt. Why, then, should we consider it unnatural that the Red Men, who have gone but a few paces from nature's free savagery, should return to it on the smallest occasion? Is there not fierceness in nature? Do not severity and thirst for blood characterize her various moods? How can we expect her favorite sons, therefore, to do otherwise than exhibit her marks when they lovingly flee back to her sympathetic solitudes?

So it was that a few short hours had wrought a wonderful transformation in the young men of Strong Foot's band. Yesterday you would have taken them for a company of hard-working fellows, with grievances, but without the serious purpose of avenging them. To-day they are a squad of howling savages, having had a taste of blood, and with a firm intention of shedding more. Then you would have noticed indications of progress toward the white man's ways in their language, tone of voice, and intelligent appearance, as well as in their general adoption of citizens' clothes. Now all these things seem to have been obliterated by one stroke of the hand of hate. Their eyes are wild, their faces swollen with passion, their coats and shirts cast aside, and their swarthy skin but partly concealed by their fiery blankets. Nowhere could you see such violent and unreasoning hatred as every movement of the band indicated, their very ponies taking part in the spitefulness, and the wild wind tossing their knotted hair and greasy ribbons in defiance. When once thoroughly aroused an Indian seems a very demon of animosity, and stops at nothing. The wonder is that, with so passionate a nature, he will bear so much.

It was now far advanced into the afternoon. The day had been perfectly bright and beautiful, with one of

those transparent skies that induce you to believe that you can almost look into heaven. Not a cloud had been visible, and the vast stretches of grassy prairie, and the long, irregular divides seemed to melt away into infinity. Talk about the grandeur and variety of the ocean ! It is a dreary monotony in comparison with the rolling, blooming prairies of the West. And all this day the great acres of buffalo-grass and the countless patches of wild flowers had been shining under an unveiled sun. But now things began to change. You would not have noticed any signs in the heavens of a storm. But the quick eyes of the Indians detected, even in the hurry of a hard gallop and the excitement of a hunt for the Wagha's blood, a yellow spot with a scarlet centre, in the southwest, that indicated a blizzard. And what could better accord with their present mood than the noise and confusion of a storm ? Let the wind shriek, and the thunder grumble, and the rain sigh, it would all come into their feelings like the voices of brothers, and the wild encouragement of hearty friends.

They knew that the blizzard would blow up suddenly. Yet there would be a few moments of stillness and suffocation before the dash came. The wind lulled a little, and their ponies seemed to pant more. They could almost smell the ozone smoking in the atmosphere. The trembling wavelets of heat rising from the prairie seemed to spring up to a greater height, and the flowers hung down their heads in momentary exhaustion. A mingling of strange lights came upon the landscape, as if a confusion of colored flames were burning in some distant valley, and casting their reflection here. There were no premonitory clouds. The gloom in the southwest deepened and broadened rapidly, and the slanting rain came dashing out of otherwise a clear sky, and in an

instant there was such a storm upon them as no one can possibly picture who has not seen it.

It may be that the exceeding brightness of the western sky renders the darkness of the storms more noticeable ; but nothing can be more horrible and unearthly than the sudden blizzards of the plains. The quenching of such illimitable glory, the fierceness of the first dash of rain, the clatter of the heavy hail upon the buffalo-grass, the vivid and constant lightning in an atmosphere charged with electricity, the crash and rumble of the awful thunder, and, above all, the demon-like shriek of the wind let loose upon almost an infinite race-course—all these and a thousand other elements of terror enter into its power to stun and overpower the heart of man. It is the Indian's simple belief that when a blizzard is blowing the fiercest animals become, through fear, as tame as lambs, and may be taken captive by a cord woven out of the nodding wild grass. Is there not a certain foundation for this tradition in the trepidation and shrinking that the stoutest human heart must feel under such a display of nature's power ?

It was through such a storm as this that Strong Foot's band rode. They protected their heads somewhat with their blankets, but, otherwise, you would have noticed no indication on their faces or in their movements that they were disturbed by it. The scintillating lightning pierced the tops of the sharp divides on every hand, but they did not stay their headlong gallop. Much was to be done before the soldiers at the post should be notified of their uprising, and every moment of that stormy afternoon and wild night was to be improved.

Their plan was to arouse the whole tribe, and make a determined resistance to the white men. All took it for granted that the Agency should be the first point of

attack ; and, after they had wreaked their vengeance there, they would see what they could do in withstanding the soldiers. They did not think much of these after-consequences, their minds being absorbed with the intoxicating prospect of immediate revenge. Having virtually declared war by their rash hanging of Sandy, they knew that the whole tribe would be held responsible, and upon this they based their hopes that the whole tribe would take part in the impending strife. Just here is the secret of all Indian wars. In every tribe there is a young man's party, whose thirst is for war. When these, or any portion of them, have yielded to resentment for the countless injustices practised against them, and have taken vengeance upon a white man, the Government treats the whole tribe as guilty, and sends its armies against the peaceful as well as the warlike. Chief Joseph and many others have urged this anomaly as an excuse for general Indian wars, since it is natural for men of red skin as well as white to defend themselves when even unjustly attacked. The Indian does not stand individually amenable to our laws. If he did a destructive war might often be avoided by the trial and punishment of a single offender, or a few offenders, whom the tribe would willingly give up to justice.

A few hours brought them to the portion of the reservation where the majority of the tribe lived. Strong Foot directed that a few of his better riders should disperse upon the several trails, and notify the Indians of what was to be done, and call them to the rendezvous. Every one knew that this would be held on the divide above their leader's tepee, where the council-fire of the young men's war-party had so long been built. They would there decide what was to be done. This announcement would cause intense excitement. The

U-gthá-a, or call to war, had not been shouted for many years on that reserve. Children had grown to maturity without once hearing it uttered in earnest. But all through that dark night they would hear it sounding dismally under the heavy sky, and by early morning the whole tribe would be upon its way to Strong Foot's divide. The women and children would come, and would follow the men into battle. Their part was to carry water, and yell while the braves fought.

When the messengers had gone the remainder of the party rode forward slowly. There was abundance of time now. They could nurse their rage and perfect their plans.

"You will join us?" asked Strong Foot of Noah.

"I do not know yet," he replied, hesitatingly. "I must go to little Wattena now. I trust the good Wagaza has made her well."

"But you will come to the war-council? You will surely be one of us? You cannot be a sneaking coyote after all that the Wagha has done to you. You cannot desert us basely after all we have risked to save you. I know you have a bear's heart in you, and you will now put the necklace of bear's claws about your neck and prepare for war."

"I do not know. I must see my little Wattena first."

Noah could go no further than this. All the purposes of his life to live peaceably with the white men were now being put to the strain. He felt unspeakably grateful to his fellow Mahas for cutting him down, but he could not persuade himself, now that he had a moment to think, that Sandy's murder was really justifiable. At all events, he thought it poor policy. He could not enter into the hopes of his comrades that a conflict with the whites would result favorably to the Red Men. But

they were all grunting their disapprobation of his apparent cowardice, and so he took leave of them, turning the little roan's head toward his home, and riding rapidly away.

The raging blizzard had settled down now into a steady rain. The change was comparable to what was going on in Noah's mind. It seemed to him that he was coming out of a storm of passion into a mood, dark and bewildering indeed, and yet more settled and rational. How far he had taken part in the wildness and excess of his companions Noah could not decide. One thing was certain. He was coming to himself now. He began to feel more sensible the moment he turned the roan's head toward home, and every step she advanced made him more certain of himself. He began to picture his wife's bright smile when she should see him at the door. It seemed years since he had left her. How much she must have suffered during all the long hours! But it would all be right now, and the little babe would clap her hands and laugh and call his name, as she always did when he came home. He laughed up into the teeth of the storm when he thought of it, and sent on the roan in her strongest gallop, in spite of the absolute blackness of the trail before him. The strangling given him had resulted in a strange stupor that had oppressed him for hours. He had wanted to go to sleep, and had only been kept awake by a strong exercise of will, and by the exciting events that had transpired. All this had now vanished, and he felt his head clear and his heart light as he approached the little farm where he and Wattena had started out to make an honest living. What the consequences of the hanging of Sandy would be he could not tell. He imagined that a mature deliberation of the whole question would calm the warlike dispositions of his

comrades, and he dared to hope that the commanding officer of the post would regard their retaliation upon the ranchmen as only a natural excess of self-defence.

But why was there no light in his little cabin? There it must be—just there, beyond this ploughed patch. Ah, Wattena and the little babe were probably quietly sleeping. The fever was over, and both were exhausted. He would look at them in their slumber, and kiss them and lie down happy at their side. Ha, here is his dog! It has found its way home. But why is it whining and leaping up to lick his hand? It must be because of the rain and the darkness. He will put it and the roan into the barn, and then go in to see the dear ones. The poor dumb creatures must be cared for. They are the remnant of all his stock, and his heart warms toward them. But the dog will not go into the barn; it follows Noah to the kitchen-door, and stands there, howling dismally, in the rain. Poor brute! It is as truthful a prophet as was Jeremiah!

Noah strikes a match in the kitchen and lights a candle. His hand trembles, in spite of all his resolution, for he hears no breathing in the sleeping-room. He ventures to go in. Yes, there is the little babe, and she seems sleeping peacefully. But where is his wife?

“Wattena!” he calls.

Why is it so deathly still, and why does not even the little babe stir? He puts the candle on a box and looks all around, into the next room, under the bed.

“Wattena!”

Still there is no response, and still the babe does not move. The rain is pattering on the roof, but the dog has ceased howling at the kitchen-door.

He lays his hand on little Wattena’s cheek. Yes, it is cold. He takes up one of the little dimpled hands;

it is cold, too, and when he lets it go it drops helplessly upon the blanket. He bends down to kiss the lips that so often called him yesterday ; how cold and stiff they are ! Poor little babe, she must have been dead some hours.

But where is Wattena—his wife ? He calls her name in each room, and then dashes out into the storm. Surely she has not gone far. Grief may have driven her out to seek comfort of wild mother nature, but she should be within hearing of his voice.

“ Wattena ! Wattena ! ”

But there are only the sighing of the wind far up in the vast sky and the pattering of the driven rain upon the grass.

Then he went in and laid his head down upon the shoulder of the little babe and wept. Why had he escaped death under the cottonwood ? Better to have died then than to live for all this pain and uncertainty.

“ O Wakanda ! ” he cried, “ have I not suffered enough ? Take my babe, but give me back my bride. Let the poor child rest, but send me the mother to comfort my heart. No more will I hear little Wattena’s voice, so sweet, so full of cheer, but do not deny me the strength of a word of love from her who is my life ! ”

All night he watched and wept, and at daybreak he laid away little Wattena’s body in the earth. Then he surveyed his unkept fields, his vacant barn, and his despoiled home. Shall he go to war ? The Hottentot, the Swede and the Englishman may appeal to our United States law for protection in life and property, but this Indian and his fellows, the original owners of the soil we now possess, can lay no claim to legal justice. He must fight or die—or fight *and* die !

CHAPTER IX.

ON TO THE AGENCY !

ALL through that dark night the startling U-gthá-a* resounded upon the reservation. The messengers rode up to the tepee, or dug-out, or cabin-doors, and gave a yell that no one could mistake. When the aroused sleepers had hurried out they cried to them briefly :

“ A Wagha has been killed ! Come to the war-council in the morning ! ”

Then they would ride rapidly away.

Old and young prepared to obey the summons. There was no more sleep that night. The fires that had been drenched out by the rain were rekindled of dry stuff which the Indians are always careful to keep within-doors, and blankets or skins were hung over them to protect them. There were muttered speculations as to the origin and outcome of the strife, but all knew that the soldiers would soon be down upon them, and their only safety was in joining the warlike band. Such was their natural love of a wild life that few of them regretted, at this moment, that hostilities had been begun. They were tired of digging the fields without ploughs, and reaping their grain with butcher-knives. They were tired of scanty rations and rotten blankets. They were told that they had plenty of money laid up at Washington—but how to get at it was the question. Perhaps they would

* War-cry.

find some in the agent's house. At all events, they could be no worse, they argued, than they were at present. There was nothing for it but to fight, and if they were killed it would only be a hastening of an inevitable catastrophe. They did not put their meditations exactly in this form, but they were of about this half-exultant, half-gloomy character.

The tepees were taken down, the blankets and bedding were wrapped up in skins and tied with cords ; such supplies of bacon and dried meats as they had were carefully secured. The long poles to be lashed at one end to the ponies' backs, and at the other to be constructed into a wicker platform, were cut. On these platforms their goods and effects, including the papooses, were piled ; and at the first streaks of day the moving households came out of the valleys of the reserve, and made their way slowly toward the rendezvous. The bucks rode their war-ponies, the squaws either walked or were permitted to ride beside the papooses on the platforms.

There is something indescribably moving and pathetic about the silent advance of an Indian company in the manner above described. You see all their race's history in their rude carriage, their portable and scanty bundles, and the evident relations of fear between the women and the men. You see their sufferings upon their faces, and their enforced poverty in their garments and effects. You see the pride into which, as a last piteous resort, they have been driven. You see their love of the wide prairie which has been their home, and their tender attachment for their children and ponies and dogs. You see a despoiled manhood, a debased but still tender womanhood, and a crushed civilization. Admit him to be repulsive, and, when aroused, bloodthirsty, there is something in his face, and, above all in his attitude, that

appeals to your sensibilities and your instinctive respect. Cooper's poetic admiration of him is not further wrong on one side than the Western ranchman's jocular contempt is on the other.

By nine o'clock the divide above Strong Foot's was crowded with encampments. The storm had cleared away, and the brilliant sun was flooding the wet prairies with twinkling glory. The Indians had not stopped for breakfast, so that their first attention was now given to satisfying their hunger, and camp-fires were burning brightly on every hand. After this the bucks assembled in large circles round a huge fire, and the deliberations of the day were opened by the passing of pipes. Then those who had chief's blood in their veins took turns in speaking briefly. One of them spoke as follows, and his speech is a fair sample of all the rest. It is impossible to preserve the poetic beauty of the language he used, or to rightly render his similes and metaphors, but the bare meaning is given :

"I feel the blood of my fathers stirring in my veins. Since I heard the war-cry I have gone back to the brave spirit of our ancestors. The sneaking fox has become the strong bear again, and I am ashamed that I was timid so long. No Maha shall ever have it to say that I died a coo.* I will kill, I will take scalps, I will have blood."

The Indians grunted and nodded their heads gravely. The squaws and children crowded in groups around the outskirts of the council to hear what was said, and at every warlike boast such as this, they broke into their peculiar, blood-curdling yell.

"Some of the old men here," went on the orator,

* Coward.

“knew my father. Umpanuga knew him, and others of you. You played with him in our old Maha village on the banks of the Missouri—the village where now stands the great city of the white men. As young men you shot arrows at marks with him, and went out on your excursions against the machu* and the umpan.† You loved the maidens of the village, and he loved one who was more beautiful than any of her sisters. In due time he bought her to be his wife, and I was their babe. The light of my father’s proud eyes, when looking upon me, I have heard described, but I do not remember it. He died in battle with the Sioux. He might have escaped, but he chose to die. I feel his blood in my veins.”

He paused to let the deep applause of the men and the wild yell of the squaws die away.

“You know the story well. It was at the time when the Mahas were in deadly enmity against the Sioux. Indeed, there has scarcely been a time when the two tribes have not been at war with each other. But this was when the hatred was at its height. It was the ambition of the Mahas, as of all Indian tribes, even to this day, to go into the camp of the enemy walking and come out riding. Now it happened that our father heard that a band of Sioux had come down from the north on a hunt, with many splendid shongas.‡ This was enough to fire their desires, and a band of the bravest young men organized to walk into their camp and come out riding upon their shongas. My father was of the company, and a particular friend of his also went. These two had been joined together since childhood in the closest affection. It was destined that they should not be separated in death.

* Bear.

† Elk.

‡ Ponies.

“When everything was ready, the party, about one hundred and twenty in number, crept down cautiously toward the Sioux encampment. I have been told that it was on a dark and stormy night—such an one, perhaps, as that which has just swept over us. The women followed their husbands and lovers into the danger, but they left the babes behind. This is why I am here to-day to tell you the story, for I was then a babe, and my mother left me in the hands of an old nurse. The darkness and confusion of the storm favored their advance, and the men had reached the centre of the Sioux camp before they were discovered.

“Ah, but they were discovered. A dog heard them, and growled, and, in an instant, their enemies were aroused and after them. Being on foot, it being their pride and ambition so to be, they were at great disadvantage. The Sioux were encamped in a little valley, out of which our fathers were not able to escape. They took refuge on a hill within the valley, and piled up heaps of stone, behind which they could hide and fight. Scarcely had they succeeded in this when the Sioux came sweeping up on their shongas and surrounded them. War was then carried on in the good old way—by bows and arrows, knives and tomahawks—and for three days and nights the battle lasted. In the daytime arrows sped swiftly in every direction, and many a proud Sioux fell headlong to the earth. My father was a true shot, and whenever his bow twanged our mothers would shout the U-gthá-a, for they knew that the arrow would reach a heart.”

At this boast the squaws took up their yell again, very much as their ancestors had done in the battle described.

“Our fathers suffered greatly from lack of water. There was no spring on the hill, but a little stream flowed

at a short distance, and to this it was necessary to go for a supply. This dangerous trip our mothers took. What would they not dare or suffer for their husbands? Their hearts were as the hearts of the she-wolves for their mates or their young. Many a brave Maha woman stole away during those terrible nights, and never came back again. They would be watching for her, and would by and by hear a scream, and then the Sioux whoop, and they would know what had happened. But some would come back. How glad they would be, and how exultingly they would shout the U-gthá-a as they came up the hill! And how eagerly would the thirsty warriors swallow their allowance of the precious water!

“On the afternoon of the third day my mother said that she would go. The suffering of the men was becoming terrible, for a hot sun had come out, and was blazing down upon them. The water that had been obtained had all been given to the warriors—not a woman had tasted a drop. But the excitement, the anger, the exertion, and, above all, the heat, rendered their thirst so great that what had been obtained served rather as an aggravation than a relief. We can know, for ourselves, how it was. Have we not felt something of the same when heated with the fierce hunt of the antelope and the deer? How cool and strong the streams seemed, and how we drew in the waters as if to cool our very souls! Think what must have been the agony of three days and nights of far fiercer exertion, with only a few drops to satisfy their longing. So my mother said that she would go. It was broad daylight, but something must be done at once. She slipped away as quietly as she could, my father watching her with both love and apprehension in his eyes.

“There were clumps of sage-brush growing on the

side of the hill, and as my mother passed one of these a Sioux warrior sprang out of it. He had been in hiding there, and wanted to show his bravery by exposing himself near the Mahas and taking a Maha life. With a frightful yell he sprang upon my mother, and plunged his knife into her back. She fell forward on her face without a moan. Quick as his knife could be withdrawn, and could be made to fly around her brow, he took her scalp, and, holding it up toward the hill, cried :

“ ‘ I have the Maha scalp ! I have the Maha scalp ! ’

“ But he was not to boast long. As the hawk swoops down on strong, fierce wing upon the prairie-dog, my father sprang upon him. It seemed but three leaps that he took from the hill. He struck his tomahawk into the Sioux's brain, while yet the words were on his lips, snatched his scalp, caught up the body of my mother, and with it ran back to the hiding-place on the hill. A hundred Sioux rose out of the sage-brush and sent arrows flying after him, but they only cut away a feather from his plume.”

Again he was interrupted by the yells of the Maha squaws, who had heard the story a hundred times, but never felt their blood warm to it as now.

“ My mother lived a few minutes after being carried in, and murmured her Dta-wá-e on my father's breast. Then they laid her away under some rocks, and over her silent body my father fought that afternoon and during all that night as he had never fought before. But on the next day they determined to abandon their retreat. Like bears when driven out of their lair they would fall upon the Sioux. Everything was arranged for the dash. The women and children were put in the centre. The braves were scattered about them. The plan was to rush down suddenly, burst through the Sioux lines, and then

scatter like quails to hide and escape, one by one. They thought they could all get out of the valley before the Sioux could get their shongas to pursue them.

“The dash was successful. The Sioux were taken completely by surprise, and not a few of them were cut down by the Maha knives and tomahawks. But the escape by scattering was not so well accomplished. There was such a large number of the enemy that a dozen could pursue each fugitive. And so there were fierce fights and many of our ancestors fell down in death. For when the ants swarm in thousands out of their holes they may pull down and devour even the beetles.

“It was in one of these contests that my father died. I have spoken of his friend. They had fought side by side, and when they made the dash they still were near each other. This friend was not married, but he was a lover. His little maiden clung to his side, and as they ran he assisted her all he could. He and my father were the swiftest runners in the whole tribe, and had it not been for the maiden they both might have escaped. As it was, my father outran the Sioux shongas and reached a river and hid in the bushes. There he was safe ; and when night came he might have crept away to me, his babe, but, looking back over the prairie, he saw his friend, with the maiden clinging to him, surrounded by the Sioux. He was fighting bravely, striking them down as the stalks of corn go down under the sharp hail. But my father could not see him fighting alone. He came out of his hiding-place, ran back to his assistance, and died by his side. And on the breast of his friend the maiden died, murmuring ‘Khta-wé-tha, Khta-wé-tha.’*

“I feel my father’s blood in my veins.”

* “I love thee ! I love thee !”

The effect of this story was various. Some of the older men were swaying backward and forward in the excitement of warlike recollection. The younger men ground their teeth in warlike anticipation, and the women kept up their yell. There were other speeches made and other stories recited, but they were all of this general character.

Soon after noon the line of advance was formed under the direction of Strong Foot. Noah had not made his appearance, much as they had desired it. And, in his absence, Strong Foot was appointed leader by general consent. A band of the most splendidly decked warriors rode first. Then came the women and children and baggage. After this rode the remainder of the warriors, as if to guard the rear. They presented a fine appearance as they advanced slowly over the bright grass and wound down into the valleys. It seemed more like a holiday pageant than a serious attempt at war. Yet the cry now and again was :

“ On to the Agency ! On to the Agency ! ”

CHAPTER X.

AT THE AGENCY.

SUCH is the perfection of communication among civilized peoples that all the world knew that afternoon that the agent of the Mahas was in danger of his life, although he was entirely ignorant of it himself. The stories flashed across the land were of the wildest sort. The Fabers were not sure of Sandy's death, but they were pretty well convinced of it by his long absence. Of course they said nothing in the dispatches of the hanging of Noah. All the blame was thrown upon the Indians. They were described as having been uneasy for several weeks on account of the failure of the ranchmen to meet all their demands for cattle and provisions. They were said to have risen suddenly and dashed down upon the whites, who were fleeing for their lives. The wildest confusion was said to prevail along the whole Maha border, and a demand was made for the assistance of the United States troops, and the removal of the Indians to the Indian Territory. Commenting on this demand, the editors all over the land defended it as eminently reasonable, and the Mahas were raved against as insatiable and blood-thirsty savages, who were only good when dead.

The day had passed in its ordinary monotony at the Agency. The family in the large, comfortable residence was a happy one. It consisted of the agent, his wife, two daughters and an aged grandaunt. The immediate contact with civilization was denied them, yet they were

able to enjoy many of its comforts even in that far land. Their home was substantially and even elegantly furnished, a piano and Brussels carpets being the principal items, of which the latter seemed by far the most wonderful to the Indian children, who had never seen such gaudy flowers before. The daughters had adorned the walls with many products of the pencil and the needle, and if you could have looked into that sunny home that afternoon you would have had difficulty in believing that it was situated five hundred miles from any considerable city.

The grand-aunt was greatly afflicted by rheumatism and fear of the Indians. She had no sympathy from the remainder of the household on either account. They were all hearty and well, enjoying wide excursions over the bright Nebraska sod, and having no anticipation of aching joints. And they only laughed at auntie's fear of the Indians. In common with all the miners and ranchmen of the West they entertained a jocular contempt for the Red Man, laughed at his anger, and despised his threats. Particularly would the agent's daughters shake their shapely sides and contort their pretty faces in their merry ridicule of auntie's fears. They had lived there eight years, and no harm had come to them. Why should they begin to be afraid now? And were not the soldiers just at hand to protect them? This latter consideration was supposed to be especially weighty with one of the young ladies, who blushed and simpered whenever a certain officer's name was mentioned. And if she were accused of a particular interest in that direction she retaliated by naming a young man in the East who was a prolific penman, and this would cause her sister to look guilty and charming. And then the mother would laugh, and the father would rub his hands, and auntie

would sigh for the good old times and good old boys; and, altogether, it was a happy home.

The agent was not a bad man at heart. His position was understood to yield him a round ten thousand a year, though his salary was only fifteen hundred. But a man must support his family and provide for old age. Beside this, the political party to which he belonged must be supported, and out of the Indian funds a large revenue was drawn. He had spent considerable money in getting his appointment, and it was, of course, only right to get it back again. Other men had done the same when they had the chance, so that he was consoled by the never-failing consideration that he was neither better nor worse than his fellows. And, last of all, he took pride in the fact that he was simply the victim of circumstances. The Indians were meant by Providence to be plundered. The country would never be settled until they were out of the way. To be sure, he admitted, and he and the doctor had just been talking about it to-day, that it was hard on the Indians to be thrust off their reservations. There was just as good land everywhere around, but the ranchmen would not take it. They wanted just what the Indians had. And where was the use of opposing Anglo-Saxon energy? said the agent. Or, as the doctor put it, "Where was the use of flying in the face of Providence?"

Along in the afternoon the agent had gone over to the carpenter's shop to talk about the wire screens that were to be put into his residence for the summer. This shop was a great gathering-place for the men, so that it was natural for the doctor and the farmer and the two farm-hands to stroll in during the conversation. The blacksmith had gone away on a hunt. They were laughing and smoking, and did not at first notice a band of ad-

vance Mahas riding up threateningly to the agent's residence. The farmer was the first to see them.

"My God ! That looks bad !" he cried.

They all started up, and the agent ran out as if contemplating an attempt to reach his home. But the others drew him back.

"We must stay here in the shop and defend ourselves," cried the carpenter.

"It is our only chance," said the farmer.

This seemed reasonable, and the agent allowed himself to be persuaded ; though, as he turned back, the tears started to his eyes, and he exclaimed :

"O my God, take care of my family !"

They went back into the shop and began to fortify it as best they could. Fortunately the carpenter had his gun in one corner, with a good amount of ammunition ; so that, if worse came to worst, they could do something toward defending themselves. The agent said he did not give up hope that he could satisfy the Indians by gifts and promises. But there was no mistaking their warlike intentions. Their number was rapidly increasing, and by and by the squaws and children came up, so that it was evident that the whole tribe had risen. The house was surrounded, and, while the men brandished their weapons and rode here and there, the women took up their frightful yell. Even from the shop they could hear that they were demanding the agent, and the poor man was deathly white, but calm and brave.

"Would it not be well for me to show myself ?" he said. "Perhaps they would listen to me. I would agree to anything."

"Let us call them into council and get them well-drunk," suggested the pious doctor, whose teeth were chattering in his head.

"That wouldn't work," replied the carpenter, who had been many years among the Indians. "Nor would it do to show ourselves. This shop is the strongest made affair on the grounds, an' we may be able to defend ourselves until the soldiers come. At all events, we can parley with 'em better here than we can outside."

"But my poor wife!" cried the agonized agent. "And my children, and my aunt! What will become of them? O my God!"

"They're safer alone than as if you were with them," said the carpenter. "I don't think they'll touch 'em. We men have got to defend ourselves or die, that's all. I'll take the gun, 'cos I'm the best shot, an' you each take up what you can lay hands on."

They followed his directions. The agent armed himself with a hewing-axe, the farmer took a hatchet, and the hands were content with long knives that they found in a hunting-jacket. One of them had a revolver, also, but only the six shells that were in it. This was the sum of their means of defence. What were they in comparison with the splendid array of Remington rifles with which the Indians were provided? There can be no greater shortsightedness than the issuing of rifles and ammunition, instead of farming implements, to our nation's wards. The design is, probably, to provide them with the means of hunting, so that they may be off the hands of the agent for a large portion of the year; but the result often is that the white men are made the game.

Meanwhile, the demands for the agent were being repeated with even greater fierceness over at the house. At last he saw his wife's white face appear at a window, and she shouted something down to Strong Foot, who stood directly under her. What she said they could not hear, but she had evidently told them, in her distressed

confusion, that her husband was not there. She hoped thus to save both him and themselves, for in her heart she was praying that he had gone away from the Agency, and would escape. But she only hastened the catastrophe. The Indians separated with a yell, and began to examine the other buildings, and some of them even rode out into the fields in search of the object of their anger.

At length a few of them rode up to the shop. He who was to have married little Kathewana, Great Bear by name, was of their number, and acted as their leader. He rode up to try the door, but before his hand touched the knob the carpenter cried out :

“ Let be there, ye damned Injun ! Git off a bit, or I’ll put a bullet through ye ! ”

Great Bear gave a yell of triumph, and retired with his band to a short distance. He took it for granted that the agent was with the carpenter and the others. They yelled again and again, and soon had Strong Foot and the whole tribe with them before the shop. They were all hideously daubed with colored earths—red and yellow predominating—and what with this and with their hatred and savage lust for blood, they presented a terrifying and awful appearance. The poor agent breathed fast, and had suddenly grown wofully haggard about the eyes. The doctor was moaning and sobbing in a corner, entirely unmanned. The hands were working hard to keep their lips moist, and their knees steady. Only the carpenter and farmer were composed and firm.

Great Bear was directed by Strong Foot to advance to the door of the shop and say :

“ We want the agent. No one else will be touched if he is given up. We want him for his robbery of us. We will protect him as he has protected us.”

There was a brief consultation within the shop. It seemed best all around for the agent to step to the window, and speak to the messenger. To deny his presence would never do. The matter must be faced, and now was the time, and he was the man to do it.

"I am here, Great Bear," he said, as he showed himself. "And I am ready to hear your complaints."

"You have heard them more than once," said Great Bear. "We cannot repeat them now. The stream in the cañon may moan ceaselessly to the rocks, but we have stopped our moaning. Your heart has been the rock. We are ready to act, not to talk."

"But you have not given me time to settle your complaints," said the agent. "I have written to the Great Father. It takes many days and nights for word to come from him. I would be glad to give you farming implements and plenty of seeds, and all your annuities if I only could. I have to act by law; and law is slow."

"But the ranchmen tried to hang Noah. This is the last nip that has made the bear turn on the sneaking coyote."

"Tried to hang Noah! When?"

"Yesterday."

"I did not know of it. Even if I had known of it I could not have prevented it. Why should you hold me responsible for what I cannot help?"

Poor man! His plea was sound, but the jury were not in a mood to entertain it.

"You represent the Great Father," said Great Bear.

"You are the only part of the Government we see. We never asked for an agent, but you were sent to us. As you stand for the Government you must take the blame of it."

The Indian spoke with wonderful moderation, consider-

ing his errand and the preparations he and his fellows had made to carry their purposes into execution. As the agent did not reply at once Great Bear retreated to consult with his leader. In a few moments he advanced again, and said :

“ Strong Foot tells you to come out. If you do, your wife and children and the others will not be harmed. If you do not we will destroy you all. The time for talk is past, now there must be deeds. Even the prairie-dogs cease to chatter when the snake has wound himself into their home. Why should not we ?”

This last simile was too much for the carpenter, and, without considering the consequences of his rash act, he levelled his rifle and shot Great Bear through the heart. The Indian threw up his hands and dropped forward upon his face.

In an instant all was confusion. A volley was fired into the shop, which did no harm save the wounding of the agent's left hand. The squaws took up their yell afresh, and the bucks advanced in a mass upon the building. The carpenter did his best with his rifle, and when it came to close quarters they all fought with desperation, but it could end in only one way. The agent and the carpenter were killed outright, the others were taken captive, and the shop was set on fire. Then a rush was made back to the house where the women were, and the frantic savages exposed the bodies of their victims where they could be plainly seen from the windows. Their yells of triumph and defiance were terrific, and a barrel of whiskey, which they had discovered in the storehouse, added not a little fuel to the flame of their passion.

But who is this that comes timidly up to Great Bear's lifeless form ? Once she spoke to him boldly, and laughed into his face as if she had a right to. They

whispered of love and happiness. They mapped out all the future and planned an eternity, almost, of joy and pleasure. They would have this and that in their cabin. They would plant this and that in their fields. They would ramble here and there in search of delights. The morning should smile for them and the evening should have no weeping. Her eyes were brave then and did not need to turn away.

Ah, but then had come a time of trouble and bitterness. How could poor little Kathewana deny the Wagha? She had been taught from her infancy to submit to him. She had supposed that his word was law. Long training had impressed his authority upon her, and when he required even that submission which her soul loathed, how could she refuse? Then Great Bear had turned his face away from her. She had become timid and affrighted. The world grew all black and the light all came out of the sky and the very flowers hissed at her. O Wakanda, what was she worth! She cared nothing for man's opinion, she gave up both body and soul to the whim of the all-authoritative Wagha.

But now Great Bear was her own again. She could gaze into his dead face without flinching. There was nothing there to make her tremble and feel ashamed. She had always loved him, and now that he was with Wakanda he knew it. He knew the whole history. He would excuse her and love her. And she would go back over the weary trail and live as she had done in her innocence. Yes, she would do just that. And oh, what a comfort it would be!

She sat down upon the ground there before the shop and drew his dear head into her lap. She kissed the chalked brow and temples as if they had been a king's. She patted his cheeks and cooed in her love for him, and

her hot tears fell upon his face, locked in the grandeur and solemnity of death. Then she swayed back and forward and sung his Dta-wá-e :

“Thou wast grand and noble, my Great Bear, my Machu machu.* Thou wast too good for little Kathe-wana. But thou knowest all now, and I am understood. Teach the doves love and you may teach me. Of thee, Great Bear, have I thought and agonized. But now thou art gone. The heavens that the Wa-ga-za† tells us of have received thee. Bravely didst thou live and bravely didst thou die. Let the free winds of the prairies whisper thy praise. In all my life will I weep for thy love.”

In the general confusion of passion this tearful, swaying maiden presented a strange but pathetic contrast.

* Lit. “Bear-bear” or “Noble bear.” Repetition is Indian emphasis.

† Missionary.

CHAPTER XI.

“ A MOMENT’S JOY TO WAIT A WEEK.”

It would be difficult to believe that the half-jocular, half-frantic creatures before the agent’s house were human beings. They shot recklessly through the windows, they yelled and danced, the women forming circles round the building and the men riding in wider rings. No attempt was made to defend the place, though a shot was fired from a window by one of the agent’s daughters. This produced no effect save to arouse the Indians to greater frenzy. Soon after the shot a rush was made upon the main entrance, and a moment later the four women were dragged out, screaming and struggling in terror. The fright of the great-aunt was especially diverting to the squaws, and more than one old hag yelled in her ear to see her start and tremble.

In times of triumph the Indians derive great amusement from the terror of their victims. Their sense of the ridiculous is by no means meagre or ill-developed, though it is an open question whether they are justifiable in the means they often employ to tickle it. On the present occasion all the captives, including the doctor, the farmer, the farm-hands, and the women, were turned over to the squaws, and great was the entertainment they derived from tantalizing them.

On the doctor particularly they wreaked a summary and suitable vengeance. Two of the strongest squaws held him down flat on the ground, while the others

poured the several bottles of liquids and powders composing his stock in trade down his throat. He was conservatively allopathic, but not to the extent of the present treatment, consequently he fell into a stupor after the tenth bottle, and never revived. The glee of the old squaws over their stiffening victim was something frightful, and struck the other captives with horror and despair. No violence was done to them, however, save that the women were almost stripped of clothing by their savage sisters, who coveted their several articles of wearing apparel.

Meanwhile the men were arranging for a war-dance. The barrel of whiskey had been well-nigh exhausted, so that they were all in a suitable frame of mind for an unparalleled demonstration. Jocularly continued to vie with fiendish cruelty in their boasts and actions. They laughed and raved, they stormed and jested, they caught up the white man's oaths and hurled them at each other and at the captives. And though all seemed confusion, it was still evident that one portion of the agency grounds was being prepared under Strong Foot's directions, for the scene of the grand dance. This was a level stretch of sod about two hundred yards in diameter. Here stood a liberty-pole, erected by the command of the agent, from the top of which a flag was even then floating.

Around this pole the Indians were piling sacks of flour and cured sides of pork taken from the rifled storehouse. They had built a sort of rude altar of dry wood under these, so that the intention evidently was to set the whole mass on fire by and by. In amongst the flour and meat a broken barrel or box was now and then thrown to assist the conflagration. A couple of casks of kerosene were also added, and when the pile was complete it

reached half-way up to the flag. This emblem of authority and protection had not been noticed until now, but it was immediately drawn down, and Strong Foot wrapped it round his swarthy person to increase his dignity and importance.

Some of the larger lads had not been content to wait until the general destruction of the provisions had commenced. On their way to and from the storehouse several feints of friendly battle had been made. Then came more real demonstrations, until at last sacks of flour and strips of bacon were converted into instruments of war, and everywhere around groups of more or less severe contest were formed. To these battles the girls contributed their shrill yells, very much as their mothers had encouraged their husbands in the larger strifes. Through these means the ground was besprinkled with flour and pieces of pork were scattered around. When this fact became known to the editors of the great papers they denied that the Mahas could have been hungry and poor at the time of their uprising. If it had been so, they argued, the Indians would have carefully preserved the provisions taken from the agent. This conclusion, however, does not follow. We must take into account the unthinking frenzy into which the Indians were wrought by long years of exaction and robbery. The future was forgotten and all thought was given to a momentary vengeance. But all this proves nothing in reference to what had been their former sufferings for lack of the very supplies they were destroying. To be sure it was a pity to have so much wasted. The flour was damaged and had been bought at a bargain by the agent in Minneapolis. The pork was rancid and rotten, and had cost little or nothing in St. Louis. The trader had thought them good enough to sell to the Indians at

a high price ; and now the Indians thought them not too good to be destroyed : yet it was a pity.

At length everything was ready for the dance. A number of rude drums were hammered by the musicians of the tribe as a signal to all to collect around the pole. The bucks took their station for the dance, the squaws squatted in circles, with the captives in front to enjoy a full view, and then Strong Foot gave the signal to begin. The pounding of the drums was renewed, and after many grimaces and bows and grunts to the witnesses the bucks began their triumph-dance. At first their step was slow and regular—as much so, at least, as the state of their heads, after an experience with the whiskey-barrel, would permit. They circled round the pole, taking short steps, rising on their tiptoes now and then, and occasionally wheeling and bowing to the company. Their motion was very like what may be seen in the South in the first stages of a colored dance. In fact, the same free and simple manners and movements are to be observed in the dances of all lands where the people are rustic and half-civilized.

Gradually, however, the braves increased the vehemence and recklessness of their movements. Their moderation at first had evidently been imposed by strong will or by stronger custom. They now began to abandon themselves to a violent expression of the triumph they felt at having hanged Sandy, killed the agent and the carpenter, and burned up the shop. The yelling of the squaws increased in frightfulness as they saw the zeal and fire of their fathers and husbands increase, so that it had now become almost sufficient to stop the blood of the stoutest heart. The braves went through every variety of motion that excitement could suggest. They leaped and whirled and swayed, they contorted face and

body, they swung their arms and clapped their hands and sprang into the air. Some of them had dried scalps that had been handed down as precious heirlooms in their families, and these they flung into each other's faces and shouted the names and exploits of their ancestors who had taken them. Strong Foot, wrapped in the stars and stripes, took the lead, and excited admiration for his strength and agility, not only in the eyes of the little daughter of Umpanuga, but also in those of the whole company.

Through all this frightful confusion the captives sat. The agent's wife was dissolved in tears, and did not seem to pay much attention to the dangerous scene before her. One of the daughters was endeavoring to console her, the other was gazing wistfully out upon the clear, bright prairie, in hopes that a certain officer would come to their rescue. The attention of the great-aunt was principally engaged in the attempt to hide her aged knees from observation and from cold in the folds of the scanty apparel left her. She was heard to murmur :

“Dear me ! I shall certainly have another attack of the rheumatism after this day's doings. I always told them so, but they would never believe me. Now they see that I am right. What an awful howling ! And it must be near supper-time—I am so hungry. Dear me ! I guess we won't get any supper. I wish I were back in Pennsylvania. But I guess I will never get there either ! O dear, what shall I do ?”

Then she fell to weeping also.

The male captives knew their danger better and held their peace. They could not tell what moment the infuriated Indians might dash upon them and bury their knives in their hearts. After their own manner, therefore, they prepared for death, arranging their thoughts

and committing their souls into the hands of the infinite Power above us, whom all men acknowledge but variously name.

At last the dancers were exhausted and sank upon the grass. Fresh whiskey was brought to them, and many of them rolled over and fell into a heavy sleep. Strong Foot and a few others remained awake, however, and carefully guarded the captives. Then the opportunity of the squaws came, for, the dance being over, the further prosecution of vengeance was committed into their hands. And if the men were violent and unthinking in their destructive work the women were tenfold more so. They went about their task with more system. Nothing escaped them, nothing was spared. The great mass of provisions around the pole was first touched with fire, and then the squaws scattered in parties to ransack the whole agency and tear and burn everything level with the ground.

Night had now come on. It was one of those wondrously brilliant nights that spread themselves above the Nebraska prairies. You seem to see more stars than in the East, and they appear vastly nearer. You have an impression that you can stand on tiptoe and toss your head into the very midst of them and drink in the bright, intoxicating air that surrounds them. The long divides, covered with buffalo-grass, shine under the sparkling effulgence. The horizon is marked and distinct all the way around. The meadow-larks have ceased their cheery melody, and the thrushes twitter no more in the trees, and all the wild birds have sought rest in branches or on the ground. The wind sighs, as if to make up for the loss of their songs, and the coyotes howl dismally in the distance. It was on such a typical Nebraska night as this that the Maha squaws began their

work of destruction, and surely the calm stars never looked down on more frenzy, malice, and vengeance than they displayed.

The mass around the pole burned slowly at first. The wood would have blazed up, but many sacks had burst, so that the flames were nearly smothered by the flour. A dense smoke rose from the first and floated grandly away toward the northwest. There were many tiny explosions, and many showers of sparks bursting out on every side, to the delight of the papooses. Then the sacks caught and their contents began to glow and snap. Then the fat pork took fire and sent up such a volume of smell and smudge to heaven as nothing else could make. At last a hole was eaten into a corner of a kerosene cask, and, with a sudden flare, the hissing streams of fire ran over the whole mass, setting all to blazing together. The whole company were compelled to fall back to a greater distance on account of the increased heat, those who could stand dragging or assisting those who were more drunk. Yell after yell arose in triumph, and countless pistol-balls were shot into the burning mass in the most reckless fashion. And the exultation of the mob knew no bounds when at last the graceful pole, which had stood so long and up whose sides the long, quivering fires had been creeping, was burned through and fell crashing to the earth—falling, as the Indians say every tree should, with the wind.

The attention of all was next turned toward the trader's storehouse, which had been fired by the squaws and now began to burn sharply. The doctor's house, the blacksmith-shop, and the large barn where the councils had been held followed. As each one of these began to blaze the mob surged, yelling, toward it, dragging the forlorn captives along. The agent's poor wife had left

off her weeping and did not seem to be conscious of the dreadful panorama that was going on before her, save that she was seen to shudder when she was dragged past the embers of the carpenter-shop, where her husband’s body was smoking. Every barn and shed and building was consumed after having been invaded and carefully plundered. For if the men in their part of the work had been improvident, the squaws more than made up the mistake. The little pigs were the special dainties, and more than one of the old hags was to be seen running about with a struggling porker under her arm.

The agent’s house was reserved for the last. It had been thoroughly rummaged, and every portable thing had been carried away. The blankets and the Brussels carpets were the objects of the most desire, and strips of the latter were seen, from that day on, garnishing the heads of the aristocratic Mahas. At last the torch was applied to the building. It had stood for several years in the dry Nebraska atmosphere, and burned like tinder. The flames burst savagely out of the windows and ran along the eaves and perched upon the roof. All the frightful splendors of a great conflagration were seen in miniature. There was enough of the building to make draughts, and no attempt was made to stop the progress of the flames. The floors and roof fell in with a succession of crashes, flaming portions of the walls tumbled out upon the grass, and when everything had been eaten through there was a final collapse; and then the agent’s beautiful home lay in smoking fragments on the ground. It seemed to take but a few moments to do it all, so powerful is a maddened savage’s torch in destroying the products of civilization’s patient toil.

Then the exhausted mob sought such quarters for the night as could be obtained. A few spread their tepees,

some took refuge under the trees that the agent had planted and the fires had spared. All threw themselves upon the ground and were soon fast asleep.

The captives were carefully tied and placed in a circle of sleeping squaws. They were allowed some liberty in choosing their places and modes of rest, but it was evident that they had no chance of escape, for the slightest motion on their part awakened one of their vigilant guard. The great-aunt went to sleep bemoaning the certainty of her having the rheumatism in the morning. The farm-hands did not long remain awake, and even the agent's daughters finally succumbed to the excessive weariness of the day and slept in each other's arms. But the mother could not close her eyes. All the terrible scenes through which she had just passed were too real and vivid to her. Her happiness with her husband that very morning, their conversation together, the fun they had cast at poor auntie for her fear of the Indians, their employment during the first part of the day, and the quiet and home-like dinner they had had—all these remembrances came before her. Then had come the sudden catastrophe. The awful truth bursting upon her that the Indians had risen and had attacked the Agency, their parley from the window, the fatal mistake in saying to Strong Foot that her husband was at the shop, the rush of the savages thither, the fall of Great Bear, the attack and the quick conflagration—through all these things did she seem to live again. The subsequent events were not so real to her. She felt as if she had dreamed them; and she was in no condition to define her own prospects of safety or to think connectedly of her own danger.

But whatever the future had in store for her, she was glad to have these few moments of quiet and thought.

The night had grown older, but—unlike the maids of all lands—had lost none of its brilliant beauty. Could it be that all that she had seemed to see that day had really taken place? Some of the familiar trees were still nodding over the Agency lawn. There were the well-known hills, and in the distance she could hear the surge of the constant river and the monotonous tumble of the worn banks into it. Ah, but the doctor’s house and the shops and the barns—yes, and the dear home where she had so long lived, were all in ruins, and from their hot foundations a smoking trail was swaying up into the sky. O God! it was all real! It had all happened! She moaned in spite of herself, and was only brought to recollection and to quiet by a cruel cuff and an oath from one of the squaws.

Thereafter, as the unfamiliar morning stars wheeled into their places, she thought much and wept, but was careful not to moan.

CHAPTER XII.

A DECISION.

MEANWHILE Noah had been searching for his bride. After covering up his little first-born babe in the earth, he had surveyed his home and fields a moment and then started westward. Why had he gone in this direction? What was this sad certainty upon his face? Why did he draw in his breath so fiercely, and what did he mean by such imprecations as had never crossed his lips before? To be sure little Kathewana had told him that the party of white officers were to be encamped over in this direction, but what had this to do with his present precipitate search and his manifest excitement?

It was the very morning when Strong Foot's band was forming for a raid upon the Agency. Noah saw some of the parties wending their way along the distant valleys, but, in his present mood, he rather gloried in the attack which they were about to make. Not that he felt that he could join them yet. There was one point that he must settle before he would be ready for such extreme measures, even if he were then. He must find Wattena, and must know why she had deserted their little home at such a sad moment. She had never done such a thing before. She had always been faithful to him and brave in trouble—more brave than he. How could even so great a sorrow as the death of little Wattena drive her into a frantic flight?

As he paced along over the bright grass, among which the wild flowers were peeping, his mind went back to the happy love-days when he had first wooed her. They were mere children when they had begun. Together they had taken wide journeys over the prairies, hunting for dandelions and daisies and the twelve-speared buffalo-grass. With their cheeks touching each other they had sat on the banks of the Missouri or Niobrara and wondered to see the eddying current sweeping away. At such moments they had talked of what they would do when Noah had become as strong as the current. They would have a little home of their own. They would be happy in each other's love. The wild stories of the Wagha's cruelty must be more than half false, and nothing of the kind would ever come to them.

Then Noah had gone east to school, among the first of those sent by the Government. His little sweetheart had watched for him wistfully through three long years ; and when he came back, with his strange power to use the English language and with his mysterious learning, she had gazed at him wonderingly out of her great, black eyes. She had been faithful to him, though her beauty had drawn upon her many offers from the young men of the tribe. Had he forgotten her ? Ah, no ! He clasped her to his heart and whispered the sweet Khta-wé-tha in her ear. Then she had smiled and forgot her timidity, and grew proud that so learned a man was to be her husband. The mystery that he knew so much had not grown less, but she seemed to come up nearer to him by her strong desire to learn a little of his wisdom and by her ennobling love of him.

After this he had gone away to act as guide and interpreter for General Crook and other great commanders. The story of his exploits reached Wattena, and with

what pride did her bosom swell ! His very deeds were hers because he was hers. For his part, he thought constantly of her sweet face as she waited for him in the little Maha tepee. After the hard ride of the day he would look up into the quiet stars and imagine that he could see Wattena peeping among them. He carefully hoarded his wages to build a house when they were married, and in anticipation he lived a thousand times their wedded life, which could not be other than happy.

And they had been married by the good Wagaza. They wanted a Christian ceremony, as they intended to lead a Christian life. But what had it all amounted to ? Here he was racing over the prairie alone, his babe under the sod and his bride missing. Every attempt he had made to better himself and be a man had been met with failure through the lack of legal protection. He had seemed to run against high rocks at every turn. He could not make a contract, he could not buy or sell to the best advantage, since he was compelled by law to deal with the trader. All his good intentions had been balked, and all his fair prospects had miscarried, all his possessions had been stolen. Before the law he was not an individual, and how could a nonentity hold its own in the fierce strife for worldly gain ?

How far he went on in his mad eagerness he did not know. The miles did not count in his present mood. He held his course steadily to the westward. He did not call, but he felt sure that he would find her. With his sharp eyes he kept glancing here and there ; not a tall stand of wild grass escaped him, not a clump of sage-brush was ignored. Wherever a woman could hide or be hidden he penetrated and explored. And at last he was rewarded ! Yes, at last, at last ! Over behind a little hillock, where a fresh spring burst from the sand

and gravel, he found his poor, distressed Wattena. She had thrown herself forward on her face and seemed to be sobbing or asleep, he could not tell which.

“Wattena !”

She did not stir. He sprang to her and rolled her over upon her back. Yes, thank God ! she was still breathing—that was a comfort. But she was unconscious, and her eyes were staring and her parted lips were trembling in a half-felt agony. How sad and distressed her dear, familiar face looked against the bright grass ! How often had he seen her long, beautiful hair tangled amongst the buffalo-spears in just that way, and yet how different it seemed now that no smile was on her face !

His first care was to dash some water from the spring into her face. Still she did not move. Again and again did he throw handfuls of the clear, cold water upon her brow and cheeks.

“Wattena ! My own wife, open your eyes ! Do you not know me ? Wattena ! Wattena !”

“At last, at last !” she groaned, and opened her great, wondering eyes. She did not seem to recognize him at first, and passed her hand in an absent-minded way over her brow.

“What is the matter, Wattena ?” continued Noah. “Why are you here ? why did you leave the little babe ?”

“The little babe !” she murmured, slowly. “What of her ?”

“Yes, the little babe, our own sweet little Wattena. Do you not know that her body is cold and her spirit has gone to Wakanda ?”

“Wakanda !” she repeated, abstractedly. “There is no Wakanda, for my Noah says so.”

“Oh, I did say so, but I did not mean it. It was

when the Wagha had treated me badly and I did not know what I was saying."

"Treated you badly!" cried the woman. "And have they not treated me worse? I could tell you—"

At this she stopped suddenly. She had half raised herself on her elbow, but now she started and stared and sank back again, murmuring :

"It is he. It is my own Noah."

"Yes, dear wife, it is your own husband. Tell me what has happened! Tell me why you are here!"

She looked at him a moment as if to collect her senses, and then, with a strong, deliberate effort, tore aside her dress and showed a deep stab in her breast.

"My God!" cried Noah, "how did this come about? Speak to me, Wattena! Tell me!"

He had not noticed the pool of blood under her left side. He had not noticed one of his own hunting-knives half hidden under the folds of her skirt.

She made an effort to answer him, but her words were faint. She smiled and pointed upward and felt for his hand, as if to bid him a long farewell. But he was not satisfied to have her sink away thus. He hastily rolled up his coat and made a pillow of it for her head. He pressed a few swallows of the cool water down her throat and applied what means his simple knowledge afforded to restore the circulation and prolong the life of his dying wife.

"Come, Wattena," he urged; "arouse yourself and tell me what has happened. For my peace of mind, for our little babe's sake, tell me! Who has injured you? Who has taken your life from me?"

"The Wagha have injured me! But I have taken my own life!"

She had aroused herself to say this much in defence of

her reputation. And the glaze of death in her eyes gave way for a moment to a noble, indignant light.

"Tell me all about it," cried the husband, agonizingly. "What about little Wattena, our babe? How did she die? What did she say at the last? Did she call for me? Did she want to see me?"

These questions seemed to arouse her more than anything else. What will call a mother back to earth more effectually than thoughts of her babe? This Indian mother, on that far-away Nebraska grass, collected her senses almost in a moment at recollection of those last hours in their cabin, and with almost a return of full intelligence, began her story as follows :

"Oh, dear Noah, have you come at last! Kiss me, my own, my husband! I have so much to tell you. It seems to me the wild grass has grown a foot in the valleys since I saw you. And I have not long to stay with you now, have I, husband? I must tell you how it was. I want you to know, so you will not blame me."

She gazed steadily and intelligently at him now out of her great eloquent eyes. He could not keep back the tears, though he tried to hide them from her lest he should increase her misery.

"I had been watching through the dark hours for you," she went on. "The little clock that you said reminded you of the white man's homes had been ticking and striking for oh, so long! Then came the good Wagaza. He said you had sent him to me. But where you were he could not tell. He thought it strange that you had not come home before him. But when he looked at our poor little babe he said plainly that she could not live. He did all that he could—I cannot tell you how much, for I must hasten. Then he spoke kind

words to me, and when he could stay no longer he rode away toward the mission."

She panted a little now, and he held the cool water again to her lips.

"All through that long night and far into the next day, I watched beside our babe. Almost every moment she called for you. 'Papa will come,' I said to her, over and over again. And then she would smile and try to clap her hands. 'Will you be glad to see papa?' I asked. 'Yes, yes,' she would say. And then I would go to the window and watch the divides, and wonder why you did not come.

"At last she did not recognize me. I called to her and held up the dandelions which she always loved so much, but they did not attract her attention. Once she said, 'I see papa!' and smiled. Then I held her hand until she ceased to breathe, and the whole house and sky grew black. But you must not cry so, my husband!"

Well has it been said that in the churchyard all the sighing is above the ground, and equally is it true that in the presence of death all the crying is on the part of those who live. Noah could not keep back the hot, bitter tears that sprang to his eyelids, nor could he prevent the violent shaking of his strong frame under a stronger, a merciless emotion.

"But I must tell you, husband," the dying woman went on; "the pure light of the sky that we have so long loved is darkening around me, I must tell you the rest. I know you will not blame me. You have always been kind and good to me, and you will understand me—you will believe me.

"When I was sure that the little babe was dead I ran out upon the prairie. I wondered why you had not come, and was in an agony to know what had befallen

you. I threw my cries up into the face of Wakanda, and I made the very prairie ring with my moans and calls for you. It seemed to me I could not bear all the sorrow alone, and I felt that I must have you at my side to strengthen and support me. How far I went I do not know, but one of the officers met me. He asked me whom I was seeking, and in my agony I told him that my husband was away, and I knew not what had become of him.

“ ‘Is not his name Noah?’ said he.

“ ‘Yes,’ said I.

“ ‘He is over here to the westward,’ said he. ‘Come with me and I will bring you to him.’

“He was on a beautiful horse, and I followed as fast as I could. My whole mind and heart were centred on seeing you. The turning of the wild sunflowers was never more true to the sun than was my desire for you. But when we came to this very spot he suddenly sprang from his horse. Before I noticed him he had caught me by the shoulders and was trying to press me down upon the grass. Wakanda knows I was amazed and startled. I thought of you, my husband. I thought of my poor dead babe, back in our cabin. I thought of Kathewana and her endless grief. I knew that the Wagha must be obeyed or death would come. I chose death. Fortunately I had one of your hunting-knives in my pocket, and, holding it up, I cried to him to leave me to my grief or I would plunge it into my heart. He laughed and stepped toward me. You know an Indian woman’s courage, Noah. I did not hesitate. I thought of you. I prayed Wakanda for you. Then I felt myself pierced, and I fell forward to the earth.”

The last few sentences were spoken spasmodically and in the greatest agony. Her throat was parching and the

death-damp was gathering upon her brow, and all the solemn dignities of the Last Enemy were being painted on her cheek.

“Do you forgive me?” she whispered as her very last request.

“Forgive you, Wattena!” cried her weeping husband. “What have I to forgive you for? Go to your long rest in peace. Through all my life will I love you. Through all my life will I sing you Dta-wá-e.”

She has gone. She felt his kisses on her lips and cheek, and that was enough. She smiles in her sleep, and from afar comes the sweeping, the fragrant prairie-wind, telling of a living Infinity and a happy eternity.

Noah stands up now, takes a long breath, and looks around him. Oh, how he loves Wakanda! Oh, how he hates the Wagha! The saying in the Good Book that we cannot love the God whom we have not seen unless we love the men whom we have seen, has no meaning to him. He has associated the religion of Christ with the white men, and while he clings with the utmost tenacity to the thought of a heaven with Wattena and the little babe, he is very sure that no Wagha will ever be admitted into that fraudless abode. The religion may all go, but the vast hope of a hereafter must be cherished by him as by all other men. He will think over all the minutiae of dogmatics by and by. One thing is certain,—if the white men can go to heaven and yet practise a hellish treachery, he can be sure of paradise and yet wreak a substantial and justifiable vengeance.

His first care is to lay his wife away just as he had done his babe. What amazing changes a few days had wrought! But he must not think of this now. He must see that everything is arranged rightly. Eternity is within a stone's throw and must be provided for. He

takes the bride in his strong arms and bears her to the top of the hillock. There he digs a grave, and, planting many a kiss on the calm lips, he lays her away. When the earth has all been filled in again he straightens himself up and sings wildly, striking himself on the face and temples :

“ My hope has gone out like a camp-fire in the early morning. What have I done to be coyote’s meat ? My bride is gone, my babe is gone—and here am I. I have been the Wagha’s friend. I have saved his wife from drowning. I have guided him to victory. I have helped him in success, I have succored him in sorrow and defeat. What can I do more ? And for all this, my lands, my barns, my yards, my household even, have been made his prey. His avarice has impoverished me, his lust has ruined me. I stand alone. Why should I not join the war party ? I can command respect for my rights only so long as I inspire fear by my rifle. Let it be so ! I only pray that before many years have passed those of my blood may stand with equal rights with the Swede and the Hottentot before the United States law. I am now for war.”

He started back toward his desolate home. He must get his rifle and the little roan and his dog, and then he would cut loose from the past and plunge into a new order of things. He knew what the result would be, but he was content. Out of the sky two smiles encouraged him to war, just as they had lately done to cultivate his fields. How could he help feeling that he was doing his duty ?

CHAPTER XIII.

“HALE FELLOWS, WELL-MET.”

THE next morning the camp of the officers, so frequently referred to in these pages, was early astir. Their leave of absence was exhausted, and they were to have a hearty breakfast and then ride back to the post. They had had an elegant time, and evidences of their success and of their methods of rejoicing in it were to be seen in mingled feathers, skins, and bottles, everywhere around.

A camp of such hunters in the early morning may be compared to the resurrection-day—there are some awful disclosures in it. They very probably went to bed the night before with no very distinct idea of the fitness of things, so that everything was left just as it was, to tell a plain tale now. The few faithful privates who were of the party had done their best to straighten up; but they had not had time to make a complete job of it.

“By Jove! Dan, this looks rather bad,” said one of the young officers to another, as they both yawned and stretched themselves.

“Decidedly. It would be a good plan if we could see everything by morning light. That is, it would be if we wanted to be perfect.”

“Gad! Dan, aren’t we perfect? What in the way of improvement would you suggest to me, now? Come, speak up like a man—or rather like a mother.”

“A little less sherry,” said Dan.

“And a little less port,” suggested another, who had overheard the conversation.

“And a trifle less old rye,” said a third.

“And not so much squaw,” added Dan.

“By Jove !” cried the original speaker, who gloried in the name of Spunker, “you are turning a running fire on me, boys. But the last shot doesn’t take effect. I missed my squaw yesterday.”

“Do you mean to say that she actually killed herself ?” asked Dan.

“Of course I do. Stabbed herself before my very eyes. Didn’t I tell you so ?”

“Yes ; but you were so full last night that we hardly knew whether to believe you or not.”

They all laughed at this, but Spunker was serious.

“It’s a fact, boys,” he said. “Gad ! but she was a daisy ! I just couldn’t keep my hands off her. And I had no idea she’d be so squeamish about it. This fancy that some philanthropists have that the Ute women are killed for unchastity is all bosh, and I know it. You needn’t laugh. What I mean is, that I have been out amongst them on duty, and—well, have seen something of their ways. But this squaw yesterday beat my whole record. Gad ! what eyes she had ! And what a form ! And I thought I was going to play such a clever trick on her.”

“What did you tell her ?”

“Well, you see, I didn’t want to run the risk of having the old man come in on us, and when she said that he was away I told her to come over this way and I would find him for her.”

“Breakfast is ready, sir,” said the private who acted as cook, touching his cap.

“All right, let us sit down. I want some coffee as

soon as I can get it, to set my head straight. Put a teaspoonful of brandy in my cup, d'ye hear, Brown?"

"Never mind your brandy, go on with your yarn. We want to see how straight you told it last night. Throw some butter at me, will you, Cooper?"

"Well," continued Spunker, munching a biscuit, "when I got to a quiet spot I thought I would try it on. Maybe I went at it a little too brusque, but the squaw just flung me off and yelled something in her infernal Maha that I couldn't understand. That made me mad, and I took a jump at her. By Jove! how her eyes shone! Honestly, fellows, though she was a squaw, I never saw anything more beautiful than her face and pose, as my artistic sister would say, at that moment. I felt ashamed of myself in an instant. But it was too late to apologize—even if I had known her cussed language. I think I did yell to her to hold on, but—"

"These particulars are quite new," laughed his companions. "You forgot them entirely last night."

"Never mind last night, boys. I'm giving you the straight of it now. The next instant she jammed a knife into her heart and tumbled over, dead. I looked to see if she were really dead. There was no mistake about it. But she was the first squaw I ever knew to act that way."

"Here we have a scientific fact worth remembering," said one of the company. "It is an exception to a great rule, and the exceptions in this world take off the honors, though they may prove the rule."

Spunker was now allowed to eat his breakfast in quiet, and Dan was placed on the witness-stand.

"How about our little Nellie, over at the Agency, Dan? You were the prime mover in this hunt, and you have never gone near her. No trouble, I hope?"

Dan blushed and swallowed a great gulp of scalding coffee.

“Everything is smooth, so far as I know,” he said. “But sometimes a fellow’s heart fails him, you know. We haven’t all got the cheek of Spunker.”

“That’s so, too. But you have made it all up with her, haven’t you?”

“Yes.”

“You anticipate matrimony?”

“Yes.”

“She anticipates matrimony?”

“Yes.”

“Why in the devil haven’t you been over to see her, then?”

“I am going to-day, when I see you fellows all safely packed off toward the post. Spunker is such a charmer that I have been afraid to be seen starting off in any direction, lest he should follow and cut me out.”

“Or cause your girl to cut her own heart out. But how about your leave of absence?”

“I asked for one day more than the rest of you fellows.”

“And?”

“And I got it.”

Spunker now woke out of an absent-minded discussing of a biscuit and cried :

“Did we not learn somewhere in our West Point course that labor conquers all things? By Gad! Dan’s experience proves that *amor* should be substituted for *labor* in the honored quotation.”

Meanwhile the extemporized orderlies were packing up the things and tying them into bundles to be put on the backs of the pack animals.

“By Jove!” cried Spunker, suddenly, “what are those devilish Indians doing over there?”

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated, and, sure enough, a band of about forty Mahas was stationed on one of the near divides, looking toward them. They seemed to have come unexpectedly into view of the camp. It was not their way to ride thus boldly up to an enemy; but now that they were seen, they were evidently discussing what plan of attack to pursue. There was no mistaking their warlike intentions, and, under Spunker's directions, the officers prepared to defend themselves.

“I guess I have got you into it, boys,” said Spunker. “But let us make a brave stand. They are two to our one, but that is not bad odds. Brown, you get the horses into that hollow, where they will be under cover of our guns. And come, boys, let us make a barricade of our bundles of camp-stuff.”

They worked hard, for the Indians were stripping for the attack. Many of the officers had fowling-pieces as well as rifles, so that they stood a double chance of victory in case they came to close quarters. When they had made a circle of their luggage they crouched down within it, and, with ammunition all ready, they awaited breathlessly the assault. They did not know of the uprising of the Mahas, but took these warlike demonstrations as caused by the amatory exploit of Spunker. On the contrary, this party had been sent out by Strong Foot for the very purpose of attacking the officers, without knowing anything of the killing of Wattena.

“Gad! Dan,” Spunker was whispering, “it is strange that Noah is not with yonder crowd, if I am to blame for this trouble. You know Noah, don't you? Do you see him amongst them?”

“He is certainly not there—I know his figure well,

though their faces seem about the same to me,” replied Dan. “See, they’re going to do the thing up in the regular circle style. It will make the fight longer, but rather more favorable for us, because we can pick them off one by one.”

With a frightful yell the Indians had started on their fleet ponies in a wide circle round the position of the whites. They rode single-file and in a stiff gallop, bending far down on the outer sides of their ponies and resting their rifles across the animals’ necks. They did not fire until they had made one circuit and were starting on the second. Then their leader threw up his arm and cried :

“Keda !”*

Instantly a blaze sprang from each pony’s neck, and the bullets whistled round the ears of the white men. No harm was done, however, and Spunker directed that they reserve their fire until the Indians should ride nearer, for their circles would be smaller and smaller. This was their method. And they made a thrilling and yet a beautiful picture as they wheeled round and round the camp, shooting incessantly. Their gay rigging, their excited ponies, and their splendid riding, and all set off against the brilliant green of the vast prairies beyond, made a scene that the officers could not look on without admiration, even though their lives were in danger.

At last they had come so near that Spunker thought it would be well to fire a volley into them. He directed the whole company to mass quietly in one spot, and when the Indians passed to fire together.

“They cannot all escape,” he argued.

The officers accordingly crept together, and as their

* Fire.

yelling enemies passed the point opposite, they let everything go in a simultaneous blaze. Two of the Indians fell heavily to the ground, and one of the ponies was disabled. The brave little shongas from which their riders had fallen went off whinnying on the prairie, their noses cast up toward the sky and their heads swaying from side to side. Nothing shows the power of man more vividly than the difference in gait and attitude between a riderless horse and one held and directed by a strong, skilful hand.

The Mahas continued their ride and kept up their firing, though as yet they had done nothing but wound one man in the arm. The white men, however, had an immense advantage, not only in their defence of bundles, but also by reason of the skillful volleys which they poured in upon the unprotected enemy. Fully a dozen of the Indians had fallen to the earth, either dead or wounded, when a signal was made by the leader, and the attacking party drew off as if to consult what would better be done. They rode back to the divide upon the top of which they had first been seen, and drew together into a council, their panting shongas standing in wide-legged fatigue under them.

Just at this moment a solitary horseman was seen riding swiftly over the prairie toward them. He had a splendid pony under him, and was coming on with the speed of the wind. His hair was flying and his swarthy face was turned up toward the bright sky. He seemed under an inspiration, whether of devotion or of hatred could not be told at this distance. He was terribly in earnest, that was evident; it was also certain that he was on the side of the Indians. His color indicated it, as well as the course he took, direct to their parleying-point.

“My God ! it is Noah !” cried Spunker.

Yes, it was Noah. His warlike instincts had brought him over there, and the little roan had done her best to have him there in time.

“Now look out for hard fighting, boys,” said Spunker, whose conscience seemed to be troubling him. “Noah has joined them, and he is a perfect demon. Make every cartridge tell, and, above everything else, shoot Noah on the first opportunity.”

His prediction of hard fighting was not long in being fulfilled. The coming of Noah was hailed with yells by the Indians, who had no skilled or acknowledged leader with them. Strong Foot had led the main band over to the other side of the reserve to burn up Faber’s ranch, and had committed the task of attacking the officers to a small band with only an inferior commander. The whole tribe recognized Noah as a presiding spirit. How opportune, therefore, was his coming at this moment of apparent defeat.

It did not take long for Noah to comprehend the state of affairs. He saw at a glance that their best chance of success was in a sudden and persistent attack, in which their numbers might be expected to overpower the officers. He was in a sufficiently reckless mood himself, and he soon inspired the remainder of the party with a headlong, unthinking courage. Putting himself at their head he wheeled them into line for a direct assault, and, with a yell that seemed to make the very hills quake, they came on. The officers had time to send three volleys into them ; the Indians shot once, and then it came to a hand-to-hand tussle. In this the Indians had an immense advantage. Every one had his tomahawk and his long hunting-knife, while the white men had not brought their swords, and could only club their

rifles or use such indifferent weapons as they could catch up about the camp. In spite of all Spunker's entreaties, therefore, about two-thirds of the white men backed off toward the gully where their horses were, and getting into saddle, rode away as fast as their animals could carry them, pursued by a squad of howling Indians. Among the number was Dan, and though the race lasted for a dozen miles, they finally escaped and carried the first news to the post that the Mahas were unfriendly and had probably risen.

Spunker and a few others stood their ground. When their fellow-soldiers had deserted them they knew that they would have a hard tussle of it, but it was now too late to retreat. They struck right and left, and fought as brave men, but it was no use. One after another was killed until, at last, only Spunker remained.

Strangely enough, his antagonist was Noah. They had seemed to come together necessarily, as being the leaders of the opposing forces. The white man had an axe, and Noah a tomahawk and a knife, and now they stood at bay, panting after a severe hand-to-hand encounter. The other Indians showed no disposition to interfere, and it was understood on all sides that this was the last act of the whole engagement.

When they went at it again the white man was the aggressor. He had glanced wildly about him as if to estimate his chances of escape, and then, with a terrible oath, he sprang upon the Indian. For five minutes they leaped here and there, giving and parrying blows. At last Spunker reached his enemy with a glance stroke in the shoulder, and the same instant Noah buried his long knife in his antagonist's heart. By what strange decree of Nemesis this came about may not be declared, but such was the fact.

Then came the scalping of the dead, the stripping of their bodies, the appropriation of their camp goods ; and the next moment the Indians were a speck of blurred crimson on the northeastern horizon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TIDE RISING.

WHEN Noah and his party reached the main body of their tribesmen, encamped near where Faber's ranch had lately stood, they reported the successful encounter with the officers and the fact that henceforth their new leader would join them in war. Both of these items were welcome news. Particularly were the Mahas pleased that Noah would take part in their uprising, and by general consent he was installed as commander-in-chief. Strong Foot yielded the pre-eminence gracefully, and was content from that moment to act as lieutenant; so nicely does popular sentiment among the Indians grade their warriors as to skill and bravery.

The conversion of Noah to warlike sentiments was thorough. He had always gone into things with his whole heart, and this new occupation was to be no exception. The slowness of his conversion only made the process more sure. Accordingly, he set about his new duties with the same energy and foresight that had characterized his saving of the white man's family from the flood, his attaining an education, his enthusiastic farming, and the other more or less successful exploits of his life.

The first thing, of course, was to make a speech. He called the principal men of the tribe together, there.

fore, and when a squatting council had been duly constituted, he addressed them as follows :

“ You all know me and the struggles through which I have passed. The whistling reeds in the ponds have not been more bent and torn than I. Some of you thought me a coo,* and some thought I did not love my race. I may say this day that you all were mistaken. I was the Wagha’s friend. I was disposed to give him a fair trial. I foolishly thought that he would keep his treaties. But their own officers acknowledge that the Government has not kept a single treaty with us. What has befallen my race on large scale has come to me in miniature. Not a hope I had of the Wagha has been fulfilled. I wanted to be a decent man. I wanted to support my wife and baby as a Christian should. Why had I not the right to do so ? You know what has been the outcome of it all. My babe is under the sod, my wife stabbed herself to escape the Wagha’s lust, my stock has been stolen—all except my little roan and my dog—my fields lie desolate.”

A moan broke from the braves assembled in council, and the outer circle of squaws took it up in a great, sweeping wail, until the vast prairies re-echoed with their untaught but pathetic cry.

“ You have seen, on winter days,” went on the orator, “ a single stretch of snow played upon by the wind. Little ridges were formed, valleys were scooped out, gaunt peaks were left tottering, and all the sharp magnificence of a mountain range in miniature was cut by the facile air of heaven at your very feet. You could match what you saw before you in many a range of great hills. So has it been with my life. It has been a small

* Coward.

copy of the troubles and privations that have afflicted my race. I have wept the tears that our fathers have shed. I have felt the same pangs that pierced them. There is not one of you that has sorrows but I suffer them as well. So, I am your brother and I will be your helper.

“ We have now gone to war, and nothing remains but to fight it out as long as we live. There can be but one end of it. The great sun will always drink up the little pond. The mighty bear will in the end crush the worm with his paw. We can only hope to wreak our vengeance, and then we must die.”

Noah said all this with perfect calmness. He stood up straight and made a few gestures with that wild grace and stateliness which only an Indian is capable of. His strong figure and his brave, intelligent face presented a heroic sight in the midst of the miscellaneous crowd of Mahas, and set off against the vast prairies beyond. He had always looked at things squarely, and he was now giving them a fair statement of the difficulties in which they were involved.

“ My plan is to send the women and children, with the captives, far up to the northwest, where the bad lands and the rocks are. There let them carry provisions, and make a strong retreat. The braves will go forward with me, and let the younger women and maidens, who can ride as well as men, accompany us to take up our national war-cry. We shall need them to encourage us. And they will not impede us in our retreat. Then, when we have wreaked what vengeance we can upon the ranchmen and settlers, we will fall back to our stronghold and there make good our defence or die. The she-wolf runs back to her lair after she has snatched what crumbs of meat she can for her pups—why should not we? If she

can defend herself there with her sharp teeth and claws, why should not we? We can try, at least."

This plan met with general approval, and Noah immediately set about seeing it carried into execution. It was a task of no small dimensions to prepare the squaws and children for a flight of two hundred miles to the rocks. Fresh platforms of wicker-work had to be constructed to convey the luggage and the feeble folk all that distance to the chosen retreat. Provisions had to be collected and carefully prepared for the long journey. The husbands and sons who were to ride forward into the fight had to select such condensed food as they could carry. And then there were farewells to be spoken, though Indian custom and tradition allowed no scenes. Noah's little roan was seen dashing hither and thither, carrying her master, upon whom depended so much the safety and salvation of his people. It was no inappropriate thing for Noah to exercise command. He had chief's blood in his veins. All the chiefs of the Mahas had resigned under promise that the United States law should be extended over their tribe. This promise had never been fulfilled, yet the chiefs had not assumed their authority again. Noah felt, however, that his blood gave him the right now to act as a father and a leader to his people, and he threw himself into his new duties with all the enthusiasm he was capable of.

It required two full days to put everything in readiness for the great flight. On the morning of the third day the whole company that was to retreat was drawn out upon the prairie and the word given to advance. It was a strange, a moving picture. War generally tears out the active half of society, but it does not send the domestic half upon a perilous journey of hundreds of miles to select and fortify a place of safety in case defeat

is the issue of the contest. These Indian women were going to prepare a death-place for their husbands and sons. Well did they set up a wail, which was half a triumphal self-sacrifice and half a hymnal despair, as they moved out upon the bright, variegated prairie. Well did they wind away as if going upon some solemn, all-necessary duty. And well did the warriors and remaining women gaze after them with awe and reverence as at last they became a breath of dust upon the horizon.

You have on the prairies all the magnificence of the ocean with a thousandfold more variety and fixity. To describe the high seas you must borrow figures of speech from the rolling plains, and you speak of the waves being high as hills, and the troughs being deep as valleys. In such a voyage as that on which these Maha women entered you have a real, stable tumbling of scenery, which gains much picturesqueness by being fixed and loses nothing by being less dangerous. And by it all are engendered the generous sentiments, the sacrificing nobility, and the pure, simple motives which are supposed to cling to the sea, so that one tribesman will die for another and count it all joy. Let the reader lay aside all preconceived opinions of the Indians and forget for a moment the dismal picture they make out of the window of a Pullman car, and tell me if there be not something worthy of our admiration and respect in this parting of wife from husband, mother from son, lover from lover. One party had a long, tedious tramp to take past their old homes, whose desolate ruins would appeal to their simple, untaught natures as no palaces can appeal to nobler peoples, and when they had gained the steep rocks they were to fortify a place in which to die nobly. The other party was to rush out upon an expedition, the object of which was to take vengeance for a century of

oppression and lying and robbery. They had come at last to realize that they exist only as wolves before the law—they would now take the wolf's mode of warfare.

Noah immediately put his little army into motion. Parties were sent out in every direction to destroy ranches, seize cattle and make what captives they could. The site of Faber's ranch was to be the headquarters, and all reports were to be made there. Two days were given as the limit of these minor expeditions. At the end of that time, at the latest, all were to be in, that further aggression or defence might be determined upon. Noah judged that it would take about that time for the soldiers to get ready and march down from the post. It would be necessary, of course, to meet them with his full force at their coming; hence he laid the strictest orders upon the parties to report before the end of their period of comparative safety. And by the evening of the first day certain of the more energetic companies began to come in. They had found absolutely no people, all the ranches being deserted as if in headlong flight by the whites. But they drove in countless bunches of valuable cattle, which were hailed with yells of triumph by the warriors remaining at the headquarters. As fast as these cattle formed a respectable drove Noah sent them on after the women, to supply their retreat with meat. By the end of the two days all the parties had brought in the same report: no people, the ranches and farms left precipitately, plenty of vegetables in the gardens, and plenty of cattle on the divides. Many an ox was roasted that night in commemoration of their success, and the Indians held the carved ribs in the camp-fire to give them an added roast while they recited the exploits and experiences of the day.

A week had passed since the hanging of Sandy.

Noah's scouts, whom he had sent out in every direction, began to come in, reporting active measures on the part of the Government to put down the uprising. All the soldiers at the post had been put in motion, and three companies had been hastily ordered out from Omaha. The whole army was encamped that evening about a day's march from them, and they could only expect another twenty-four hours' freedom from attack. All this was welcome news to Noah. He was impatient to strike one honest blow against aggression and robbery, and then go to be with Wattena and the little babe. He ransacked his brain, but he could find no recollection of any verse out of the Good Book which forbade him this blow. He had never heard of George Washington, and only knew of General Grant from a fellow-Maha to whom the agent had given that name out of respect for the great warrior. But he was unconsciously acting upon the principles which had made these names and the thousands of other patriots famous in the land of American freedom. He had no banner of stars and stripes to prate of, yet he felt that he had the right of all animals that can talk, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Every place that had not yet been fortified was put in such capability of defence as they could command. Noah wanted to give as much time as possible to the women to reach the rocks and build a substantial retreat. Every moment would be precious, and it was his policy to keep the soldiers at bay as long as might be. He knew nothing of breastworks or trenches: even if he had known of them he had no shovels to prepare them; but such protection as they had in the way of natural knolls, or bundles of skins, or logs of wood, they made full use of.

Along in the afternoon of the next day the last of the

scouts came hurrying in, reporting that the advance lines of the army were just at hand. Sure enough, in a very few minutes small parties of them were to be seen scouring the country in search of the enemy. Every clump of bushes was examined, every worn hollow between the divides was carefully scrutinized, and every favorable place for an ambushade was penetrated. After these came the main body of troops, marching in regular order, with banners flying and muskets glancing. The army was composed mostly of infantry, a circumstance that would give the Indians a temporary advantage. What cavalry there was had only indifferent horses, which were by no means able to cope with the swift, tireless ponies of the Indians.

The soldiers took position about a quarter of a mile from the defences of the Indians. The officers were seen scanning the preparations of the enemy through their field-glasses. A band of them even rode to a little hill to the westward to get a better view, though they rode back fast enough when a party of Indians started, whooping and yelling, toward them. No fighting was done that night. The darkness came down softly, peacefully, and soon the large fires of the soldiers and the twinkling smudges of the Indians were standing out against each other in the gathering gloom. The skulking coyotes began their cry, the tireless wind came sweeping up from afar, and the soft stars came out. It was all so peaceful that it was difficult to believe that two armies were encamped against each other on that gentle plain, ready to begin a serious and bloody encounter at the first streaks of light. And the combatants were brothers, too, in spite of the legal restriction, and the general impression, making Indians to class with brutes, and considering them only good when out of the way.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TIDE STAYED.

WORD had reached the post of the capture of the agent's wife and daughters, and the officers, including Dan, were doubly anxious to act wisely in subduing the rebellion. They argued that too great haste would only induce the Indians to kill the captives. A parley might do some good, and this was at length agreed upon.

Accordingly early the next day, Dan with four brother-officers was sent out under a flag of truce. Noah sent Strong Foot with an equal number of the lesser chiefs to meet them. The conference was held on the little knoll to which the band of officers had ridden to reconnoitre, and was in plain view of both forces.

Dan acted as spokesman for the whites, and he spoke through an interpreter, that all the Indians might fully comprehend what was said.

"You know," he said, "that the white officers and soldiers are your friends. We do not take pleasure in fighting you. Often have we befriended you when our orders would scarcely permit it."

"We know," answered Strong Foot.

"The strange place you occupy before the law is not our fault. We are sorry for it. We would be glad to remedy it if we could. But our orders now are plain. You have killed a ranchman. You have killed the

agent and the carpenter. You have killed some of our officers. Our orders are to march against you and punish you by force of arms. The demand of the American people is that we sweep your tribe from the earth, or, if any remnants are left, to remove them to the Indian Territory."

"It is well," replied Strong Foot.

"You understand what is expected of us. But we are not disposed to carry this sentence into literal execution. We will show you mercy. And now I am instructed to make this demand of you : Restore the captives unharmed, give up those who have committed the outrages, and let the rest of you go back to your farms quietly. If you do this we will do you no harm. If you do not we will sweep you from the earth, and not a child of your tribe shall be left."

Strong Foot straightened himself up and replied as follows :

"You say you have mercy for us. We do not want it : we ask only for justice. The Wagha have broken treaties with us. They have robbed us of our bread, our cattle, our money. They have ruined our wives and daughters. They have crowded us like coyote pups to the rocks. Now we will show our teeth. Now we will bite."

He was interrupted by a pistol-shot. It was always a question who fired it ; but the Indians claimed that it was an act of treachery on the part of the whites, the soldiers laying the same charge against them. At all events, the Indians now whipped out their pistols and shot three of the officers in their tracks. Then, with a yell of triumph, they ran back to their defences.

Dan received a bullet in his breast, but was not killed. He fell forward and was unconscious when the soldiers

picked him up, but recovered. His two friends died before the relief came.

This act of treachery aroused the army to the highest pitch of excited bravery. An attack was immediately made upon the Indians. Two cannon had been brought up, and against these the fortifications of the besieged speedily gave way. The Indians fought with the greatest desperation to hold their position. Noah was to be seen everywhere, encouraging the men and directing the repair of the damages done by the large guns. But it was no use. Early in the afternoon they were forced to mount their ponies and conduct the warfare more on the plan of their fathers. This was a great disappointment to Noah. He had a pride in copying the white man's methods of defence. Perhaps he dimly hoped that if white men could thus repulse the attacks of white men the red men ought to be equally successful, and they would gain a permanent victory. At all events, a resistance, even of a few days, would be most valuable to the squaws. But it had all proven vain. They must dash here and there on their fleet ponies and harass the flanks of the enemy as much as possible before the long ranks of infantry finally closed in upon them.

When once fairly mounted the Indians felt more at home and fought with even greater bravery. The commander of the white forces knew that they would defend their squaws and children, and his aim was to reach the place speedily where these were hidden. Consequently he made little attempt to attack the Indians save when they massed themselves behind rocks, or in clumps of bushes directly in his way. He pushed on as rapidly as possible upon the line of retreat which the squaws, according to the reports of the scouts, had taken. He was greatly surprised at the speed with which they seemed to

be fleeing. He did not know what a start the military foresight of Noah had given them. He frequently confessed, however, that he never knew a retreat to be better covered than this was by the braves under the skilful handling of their intrepid leader.

The record of that week of running warfare cannot be written. No pen can fittingly describe it. The stubborn advance of the column of infantry, the skirmishing on all sides at once, the night alarms, the massing of the Indians at times on one headlong attack, the yelling of the young squaws who were as brave as the men, the contests between the bewildered cavalry and squads of the enemy, the individual daring and the heroic conduct displayed on both sides, make up a story which no human tongue can tell and no pen fully portray. A line of bodies was left on the sweet sod, and the train of wild beasts skulking in the rear grew larger and more thirsty mile by mile. It was a bitter struggle, but it could have only one end.

One incident made a strong impression upon all who witnessed it. The army had just broken camp one morning, when Strong Foot and a half dozen companions were seen riding off upon some expedition. A reward had been offered for the capture of Strong Foot, because of his being leader at the time of treachery under the flag of truce. Consequently a party of young officers, the best mounted in the army, volunteered to pursue him quietly and attempt his capture. He had ridden off to the southeastward, so that the pursuing party could drop unnoticed to the rear and head him off on his return.

Several hours passed. The army had advanced steadily upon its course, fighting as it went, and was now taking its dinner on a little hill that gave a wide view of the country. Suddenly on the horizon to the southeast there

was a speck which gradually grew into a horseman. After him came three other horsemen, sweeping on as if blown by the wind. In ten minutes they were clearly to be seen, and they proved to be Strong Foot pursued by three of the officers. Through the glasses it was evident that the white men were gaining on him. His brave little shonga was limping, and though he encouraged him as best he could, it was evident that he was on his last legs. He had had a terrible chase of it. All the others of the party had been captured, and were being brought up by the remaining officers.

Ah, but there were as sharp eyes over in the Indian camp as the bright lenses of the field-glasses can give you. The beautiful little daughter of Umpanuga had seen the plight of her lover, and she now rode out on a swift shonga as white as snow. Her hair was flying, and her quaint Indian dress set off her figure to the best advantage. Both armies paused and looked to see the result of this act of love. She would save the brave Strong Foot. She would give him the swift white shonga, and, if need be, she would die out there on the prairie. See! Strong Foot sees her and waves her back. He is swinging his rifle round in hopes to load it. All the cartridges have been used, but perhaps he can find a few about his dress somewhere. No! They are all gone. And his little love is still coming on to him! He will not take her horse—no, he must not take her horse. Like every Indian woman, she could hide like a quail in the grass, but he will not put her to it. Ha! There is a shot! The bullet whistles right by his ear—one of the officers has sent it. And, O Wakanda! the little love tumbles! Right forward over the shonga's neck she falls. The bullet has missed him, but has buried itself in her heart. She was only a hundred yards from

him, and he saw her bright smile as she hurried on to save him. The white shonga goes away swiftly over the bright grass, but he does not call her back. He springs from his own tottering pony and falls down at his sweetheart's side. She is panting now, but can smile for him. He presses a kiss on her dying lips, and then the officers come storming up. He rises and closes his lips in an Indian's proud silence, and goes away into captivity.

Not much remains to tell. It was the old story of a tribal slaughter by troops who, at heart, were really friendly to the Indians. The retreat prepared by the squaws was reached. The Indians found it well selected and provisioned. Ah, but there were sad hearts there, for more than half of the warriors had been slain. Scores of Indian women went out during those dark nights to beat their temples and sing the sad Dta-wá-e of their husbands and sons. It required all of Noah's authority to save the captives, but at last this was done, much to his relief. His Christian principles stood a test before which his humane sentiments had failed.

The army laid siege to the place. This was prosecuted until the coming on of the winter induced the commander to offer terms of surrender. Those of the tribe who should be designated by a United States commission as innocent should be allowed to go back upon a portion of the old reserve. Noah and the others should be sent to the Indian Territory, where all northern Indians, as the records show, suffer a lingering misery and a sure death. These terms were finally accepted. The captives were delivered up, much to the delight of Dan. Noah was placed in chains, and with Strong Foot sent off to a carefully guarded imprisonment in the *Land of Fire*, as the northern Indians call the Indian Territory.

A commission sat on the case, chose out the most unintelligent-looking Mahas, and gave them about one-third of their old homes. The remaining two-thirds were appropriated by the Indian rings within rings which make up a large portion of our political machinery. A cold winter came on. The new agent was a kind man, but he could not feed the Mahas, who, through their own and others' fault, were entirely destitute, and many died. But the sun came out again, and the happy ones in eastern homes wondered how any one could sorrow in such bright weather. The ranchmen came back to their broadened fields, and the sentiment, "There is no good Indian but the dead Indian," became again, or rather continued, the law of the land.

CHAPTER XVI.

AD CALENDAS GRÆCAS.

“GENTLE reader,” say our old romancers. I say the same. In recording the history of the Maha uprising I am brought, by the inevitable logic of events, to a conclusion. And I say “gentle reader,” not because I have any authority for supposing that you have “gentle” blood in your veins, but because not one of you, probably, has passed through a tragic scene in your lives. You have lived in more or less luxury, you have had more or less happiness, you consider yourself more or less fortunate. Consequently you may be disposed to look upon the foregoing narrative as a highly wrought description meant for entertainment merely. In this you are mistaken. I am making an appeal to the American people, and I ask you to hear me out.

Our nation has many genuine statesmen. I am not of the number of those who think that the spirit of Hamilton, Seward, and Lincoln has deserted our shores. Now the question is : Can any one of our learned statesmen tell us why the enactment of 1789, which provides that no Indian can sue or be sued, or be a party to any suit in a United States court, should remain in force in a Christian land ? Is there any reason why the Indian, rather than the Irishman or the negro, should have this restriction placed upon his share of the rights of every human being under our Constitution ? He has hands and feet, a mind and a heart, and some philanthropists have contended

that he has a soul. Is he not then a person? And does not our Constitution recognize the right of every *person* to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? If happiness consists in living in a tepee and hunting jack-rabbits, whose business is it? The German gets happiness by drinking beer, the Englishman by eating beef, the American by running himself thin after money. Can one say that either of the others stands in the way of civilization and should be got off the earth as fast as musket-balls and bad whiskey can do it?

Suppose for a moment that Noah could have gone into the nearest court and entered suit against the Faber brothers for the recovery of his stock. There would then have been no occasion for the attempt to steal them back. Suppose the ranchmen had known that the Mahas stood on an equality with themselves before the law. They would never have imagined that a hue-and-cry against the Indians would secure the reservation for the whites. If a white man trespassed on an Indian's farm the latter could have gone into the nearest court and sued out a writ of ejectment and put him off. That would have settled the whole difficulty. The fault was not with the agent, nor yet was it wholly with the Indians. The fault lay in the anomalous position forced upon the Indians by their lack of personality before the law. Put the Danes in this position, and you would soon have a Danish Question, just as now you have the Indian Question. When you say to men, "Your only defence is the rifle," you must not be surprised if they use it. The result is, innocent agents lose their lives, homes that might be happy are broken up, and the border is kept in constant turmoil. Let the statesmen of our land sit down quietly and ask themselves this question: Without law, when will the Indian Question be settled? And will not

the answer be found in the old Roman sneer : “ *Ad Calendas Græcas* ” ?

Our nation has theologians who are interested in the spread of Christianity over our own land and into all lands. Let these endeavor to put themselves for a moment into the place of the Indian. You are told of a God who made all mankind, and of a Christ who came to redeem the whole race. You are told of justice and equity and brotherly love. You are informed that this religion which you are urged to accept insures the practice of these high virtues and their spread over all the earth. You are gravely told that the white men, to whom you owe everything, are Christians. Yet you lose your stock. You cannot make a contract. You have no existence before the law. Any one can rob or kill you, and if the agent does not or cannot take up your cause, you must be quiet, or go to war. You begin to wonder where the justice and equity and brotherly love come in. Query : How long would it take to Christianize *you* under these circumstances ?

Our nation has the largest number of honest, conscientious business men of any country on the globe. This is true in spite of the frauds and defalcations with which our papers teem. Here is a little problem of figures to which their attention is most respectfully invited. How long would it take you to accumulate a fortune if your property were open to every hand ? Given your present capital and your carefully acquired business knowledge and habits, in how many years would you be able to save enough to educate your children and support your families, if you had no insurance and no law ? If this lack would be a serious drawback to your business, can you tell any reason why the Indians should be subjected to it by a nation in which you form so important a part ?

Our nation has at its foundation a great company of hard-working, industrious citizens. I appeal confidently to you. I believe in your integrity, in spite of demagogism and socialism. And I ask you this: Would work be pleasant to you if you had no assurance that you were to enjoy the fruits of your toil? Suppose your next neighbor could help himself to your barrel of flour, and you would be utterly powerless to prevent or punish him: would thrift and industry mean the same to you as they do now? Suppose you were compelled by law to work for a man who paid you only one half of ordinary wages, and might, if he chose, refuse to pay you anything. Suppose you were compelled by law to trade with a man who charged you twice more for his things than other merchants on that street. Suppose you had a little sum laid up for a rainy day. To be sure, your father left it to you, but that does not matter; it is yours. Perhaps it is doubly dear because left by him whom you loved so much. But the town council spends this sum for you, without asking your consent or advice. Your wife goes in rags and your children are not educated; but the wives and children of the members of the town council ride by in silks and satins. How long would it be before you would go on a strike?

The Indian Question will be solved when the cheap but priceless blessings of just and equitable law are extended to the red men as well as to the white, the yellow, and the black. If that be not done, when will it be settled, except in the shameless extermination of a race? *Ad Calendas Græcas—never!*

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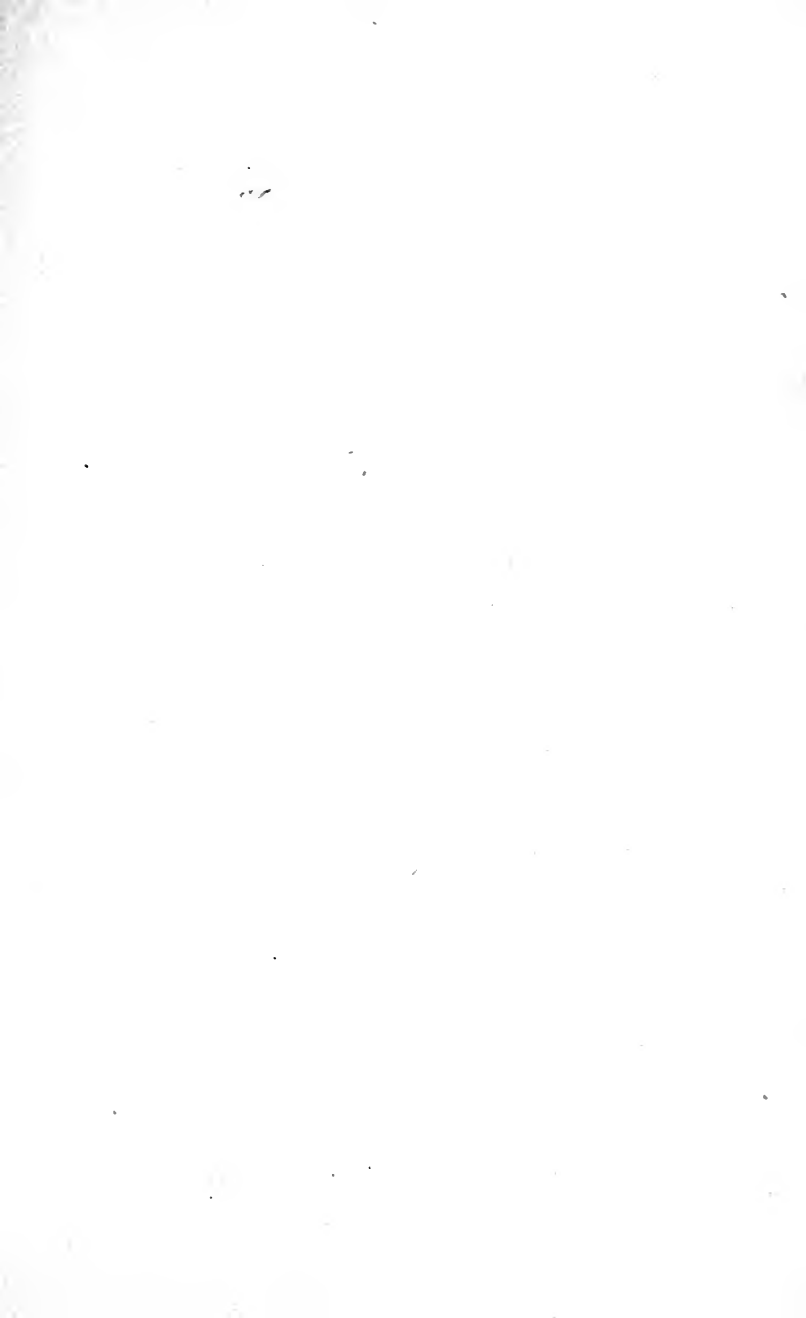
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